

## **District Fee Committee Candidates -- Summary of Duties, Term, Time Commitment, and Appointment Process**

- District fee committee members serve at the pleasure of the Supreme Court for a four-year term. By Court Rule, district secretaries also serve at the pleasure of the Director of the Office of Attorney Ethics (OAE).
- There is a stipend provided to the district secretary to reimburse the secretary for costs and expenses (such as copying and mailing costs), but that is not a salary or payment for services. The work of all who participate on the district fee committees is provided on a volunteer basis, and the fee arbitration system in New Jersey depends on – and thrives because of – the dedication, commitment, and efforts of all of the volunteers (who include all committee members and officers).
- Both attorney and public member candidate names (along with (a) the Volunteer Information Sheet and (b) the candidate’s resume or bio) are submitted by the fee committee vice chairs to the Statewide Fee Arbitration Coordinator’s office within the OAE by mid-November. Ethics checks are run on every attorney candidate, after which the names of all candidates are sent to the vicinage assignment judge for review. Please be aware that prior disciplinary history or a diversion will cause the disqualification of the candidate. For confidentiality reasons, the OAE can give no information to the district committee about why a particular candidate was not appointed.
- It is the responsibility of all district officers to take continuing steps to recruit new candidates for seats on the district committee. The pool of candidates should reflect the diversity of the bar and the community in the particular district.
- All candidate names are submitted to the Supreme Court liaison Justice for each district whenever a vacancy may occur, or at regular intervals to set the committee membership in place for an upcoming term of service. More candidate names than actual vacancies are submitted to the Justices to allow for choice and variation. If the list of candidates is short or light for any reason, the Justice may decline to appoint the full number of members requested for the particular district for the upcoming term of service.
- Actual selections are made by the Supreme Court liaison Justice for each district fee committee, after approval by the vicinage assignment judge.
- Because of the variation in the selection practices of each liaison Justice, candidates should not expect to hear from the OAE regarding whether they have been selected until close to the start of the term in September of any year.
- Selected candidates will be invited to attend an orientation/training session prior to the commencement of their term of service, with the date to be set by the OAE. The training session should last under three hours.
- Selected candidates will receive schedules for hearings or any meetings directly from the committee officers in their own district. The committee officers for each district include the district fee secretary (a continuing position, with the secretary acting as the screener of cases

submitted, and not acting as a hearing officer for any matter), and the district chair and vice chair (annually-appointed positions).

- District secretaries may seek ethics CLE credit for district meetings which comply with standards for such credit, by submitting the application materials for such credit to the OAE at least a month ahead of the scheduled meeting. The OAE will also seek such credit for attendees at OAE-organized seminars, meetings and trainings, if appropriate and if such authorization is received.
- Training and reference materials will be provided by the OAE to all selected candidates.
- There is a *pro bono* exemption for attorney members (*pro bono* exemption code 89; also referred to as a *Madden* exemption).
- Selected attorney candidates should expect to spend roughly one day per month on fee arbitration matters.
- Committee members who cannot keep up that commitment of service should consider stepping down. To do so, the volunteer should send a written letter of resignation to the district secretary, with a copy to the OAE. The OAE understands that the schedules of volunteers may change for any number of reasons, and the OAE will appreciate and value the service of members, even if it turns out to be abbreviated. By stepping down, the member would thereby start up the process of having a replacement member appointed to complete the unexpired term.
- The **public members** of the district fee committees are absolutely essential to ensuring the integrity and fairness of the fee arbitration system, as they bring an indispensable and invaluable perspective to the process. Their participation on fee arbitration panels supports the Court's mission of maintaining public confidence in the integrity of the profession and the judicial process; their participation validates the fairness of the process.
- All committee members are supported by their own committee officers, co-workers, and the fee arbitration staff within the OAE.
- The fee arbitration process is designed for members to succeed (through support) in their various roles, as their success assures fairness of the process.
- Committee members and district officers may call the Statewide Fee Arbitration Coordinator at the OAE, at 609-403-7800 with questions or issues as may arise during the volunteer's term of service (particularly when the question is about the law), or for further information.