Guide for Courts in Writing a Statement of Diversity

Judge Theresa Dellick, Mahoning County Court of Common Pleas, Juvenile Division

As a resource to courts as they prepare and adopt a statement or policy on diversity, the Ohio Judicial Conference's Committee on Professionalism and Diversity offers this guide for review. Each statement should reflect the individuality of a court and fit that community's makeup and values.

Issues to consider when drafting a diversity statement include:

- Tying in how it will coordinate with the court's mission, vision, and values
- Identifying marginalized groups
- Connect the statement directly to actionable steps a court can take
- Keeping the statement apolitical

A diversity statement is not just about race and gender, but also about socioeconomics, disabilities, varying career paths and educational backgrounds, to name a few. The statement should make all who enter the courthouse know they will be treated fairly and impartially despite any differences.

Step 1: Understand the Purpose

Before writing, clarify:

- Why the court is preparing a policy
- Understand the definition of "diversity"? (Race, ethnicity, gender, disability, socioeconomic background, culture, religion, first-generation status, etc.)
- Learn the challenges of marginalized individuals
- Understand the impact of diversity and how it benefits the court

A diversity statement is **not**:

- A personal hardship essay outlining your personal journey
- A political manifesto addressing your political position
- A generic statement about being "open-minded". Generic statements mean nothing

It **is**:

- Evidence of impact on marginalized individuals
- Reflection + action of court purpose
- Future commitment of goals to be attained

Step 2: Show Concrete Actions (Most Important Section)

This is the core of your statement.

Answer:

- What do you want to do for others?
- Why do you want to do this?
- How does it affect others?
- Are you showing an awareness of its importance?

Use this format:

- Plan
- Organize
- Activate
- Achieve

Be specific. Avoid vague phrases like:

- “We value diversity.”
- “We treat everyone equally.”
- “When one succeeds, we all succeed.”

Step 3: Reflect on Growth and Learning

Demonstrate humility and growth:

- Define why this is the court’s purpose
- Why is this important – the benefits of promoting diversity

---

Step 4: Outline Your Commitment

Explain what you will do in the mission statement and why.

Address:

- Recruitment efforts/staff reflection
- Policy or institutional change
- Public access/building layout/signage
- Staff treatment and personnel policy
- How it relates to court and judgments

Be realistic and specific Do not make it a self-praising statement – no humble bragging or aggrandizing statements.

Step 5: Keep It Focused and Professional

Length: Usually 1 – 3 sentences.

Tone:

- Professional
- Reflective
- Evidence-based
- Forward-looking
- Positive

Avoid:

- Overly emotional
- Hypothetical
- Generic terms
- Coined phrases