

Courts and Civility

The rule of law and the independence of the judiciary are being debated everywhere today. These principles are fundamental to the strength of our democracy. To meet the moment, United States District Judges Beth Bloom and Robin Rosenberg developed *Courts and Civility*, an adult-focused program that (1) **INFORMS** the public about the rule of law and what courts do; and (2) **PROMOTES** the need for civility and respect for the rule of law and the judiciary.

Courts and Civility is a pre-packaged and easily adaptable program that includes a PowerPoint and interactive handouts that judges, lawyers, and other leaders can use to educate the public about the courts and the need for civility.

Overview

Courts and Civility begins by informing the public how our government works. The program explains how the rule of law protects fundamental rights, ensures equal treatment under the law, and provides access to justice.

Next, the program discusses judicial independence. It explains what judges do and why an independent judiciary is necessary to the rule of law.

The program promotes the need for civility—the idea of claiming and caring for one’s identity, needs, and beliefs without degrading someone else’s in the process—and respect for the rule of law and the judiciary. Civility is fundamental to applying the law to everyone equally.

Implementing the Program

Courts and Civility is designed for use by attorneys, judges, and other leaders when speaking in the community, such as at schools, Kiwanis Club events, Chamber of Commerce events, and HOA meetings. The program relates the rule of law, judicial independence, and civility concepts so that nonlawyers can understand and appreciate their importance in their everyday lives.

Like the *Civil Discourse and Difficult Decisions (CD3)* program, *Courts and Civility* provides a complete, easy-to-use, and self-explanatory set of materials. The idea is that anyone will be prepared to speak about the rule of law, judicial independence, and civility by accessing the materials.

Courts and Civility is designed to be a 30- to 45-minute program. The presenter can display the PowerPoint if there is equipment available, rely solely on the PowerPoint as an outline for the presentation, and/or distribute handouts to the audience. The program is designed to lend itself to sound bites, excerpts, and posts on social media.

The materials are structured to allow the presenter to elaborate on certain topics or examples, engage in audience discussion, and adapt to different audiences and settings. The current draft of the presentation contains more high-level information. The (optional) accompanying talking points will include more in-depth notes and guides. For example, the current slide on how the rule of law shapes everyday interactions includes short, simple examples, such as getting a job or buying goods. However, these examples can lead to discussions about labor laws, anti-discrimination laws, consumer protection laws, and so on.

The program materials include:

- For the **presenter**, a PowerPoint and handout.
- For the **audience**, a handout.
- For both the **audience and the presenter**, there are additional **tools and exercises** to make the presentation more interactive. These include:
 - A variation of the U.S. Court's [Quiz on the Impact of Federal Courts on Law-Abiding Citizens](#). The variation would include simpler, but more resonant, examples of how the rule of law affects our day-to-day lives.
 - A variation of the CD3 [self-reflection quiz](#) on civility and civil discourse.
 - A list of compiled resources, so people know where they can learn more.
 - An infographic on how the federal judicial system works, located on the [Second Circuit's outreach website](#).
 - The [ground rules](#) for civil discourse from the CD3 program.
 - The [American government-related civics questions](#) from the U.S. naturalization test. These will help educate the audience about how the U.S. system of government is set up, why it is set up that way, and how its origins are connected to the Rule of Law.

The PowerPoint, handout, and contact information can be downloaded at: <https://www.flstd.uscourts.gov/courts-and-civility>