

2/10/2026

# Judges' Women's Group

A supportive community of trust for justice-involved women.

 **RAMSEY COUNTY**  
Community Corrections

# Agenda

- I. Introductions and Presenters
- II. About the Judges' Women's Group
- III. Participation Spotlights
- IV. Recognition and Gratitude
- IV. Questions and Discussion



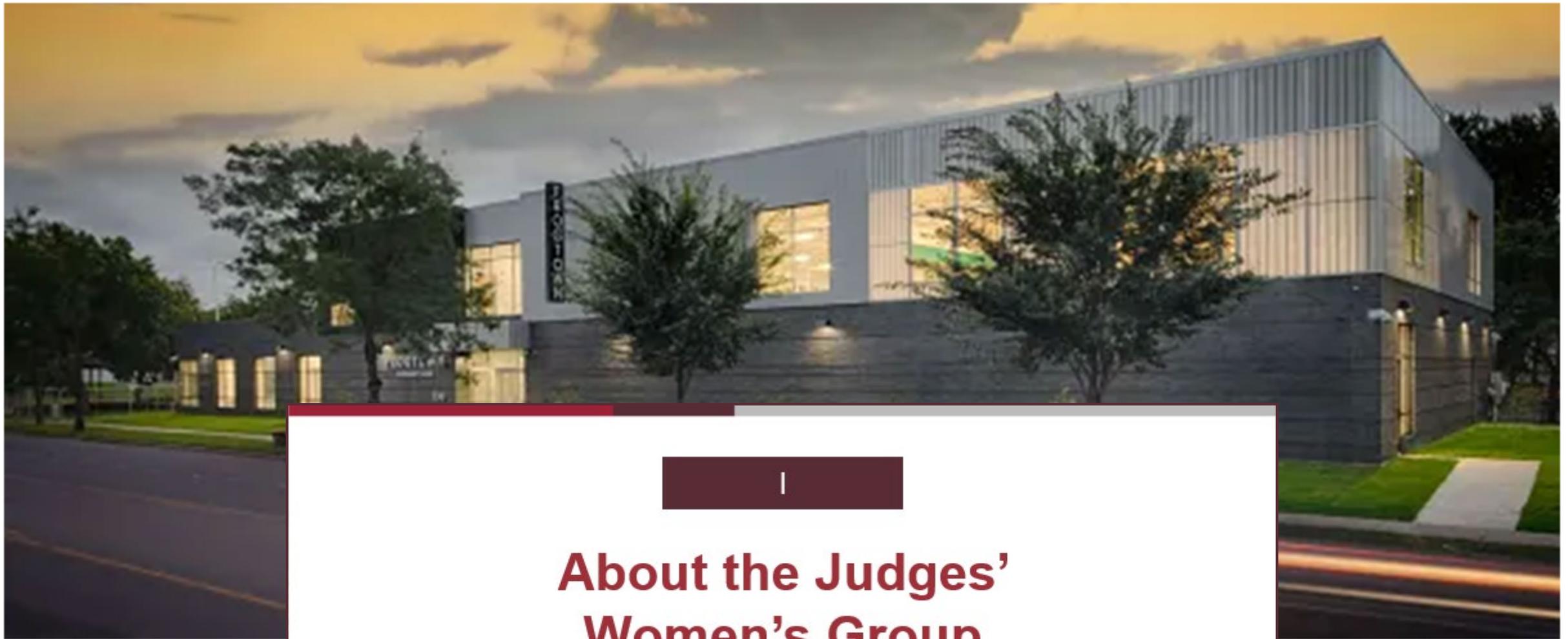
# Introduction and Presenters

## I. Introduction

- Nadir Abdi, Deputy County Manager, Health & Wellness Service Team
- Gloria Reyes, Deputy County Manager, Safety & Justice Service Team
- Monica Long, Director, Community Corrections

## II. Presenters

- The Honorable Sara Grewing, Chief Judge, Minnesota's Second Judicial District
- The Honorable Maria Mitchell, Judge, Minnesota's Second Judicial District
- The Honorable Nicole Starr, Judge, Minnesota's Second Judicial District
- Fulisha, Participant, Advisory Circle, Women's Group
- Brenda, Participant, Advisory Circle, Women's Group



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## About the Judges' Women's Group

# About the Judges' Women's Group: History and Purpose

- 2002: Men's Group Begins
  - Created by Judge Stephenson (retired) and Probation Officer Daryl Pridgen (retired).
  - Meets bi-weekly at the Wilder Foundation.
  - Judge Timothy Carey currently co-leads with Judge Stephenson and a group of male volunteers.
- 2018: Women's Group Begins
  - Created by Chief Judge Grewing and Judge Nicole Starr for women at the Ramsey County Correctional Facility.
- 2019: Women's Group Moves to the Community
  - Group meets at Dunning Recreation Center, Midway YMCA.
  - Emma Koski (public defender), Gail Moerke (Ramsey County Community Corrections Department staff), and Judge Maria Mitchell join as facilitators.

# About the Judges' Women's Group: History and Purpose

- 2024 - Present: Weekly Meetings at Wilder Foundation, then Frogtown Community Center
  - Muteeat Lawal (Assistant Hennepin County Attorney), Lyndsey Olson (Saint Paul City Attorney) and Veronica Walther (Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings) join as facilitators.
- What Happens at Group?
  - *Improve the lives and health of women involved in the court system through Probation and Child Protection.*
  - Satisfies court-ordered probation conditions: Pro-social activity and Sober Support Group, assistance with employment resources and housing stability.
  - Focus on restorative practices and Seeking Safety curriculum.



# Mission and Vision Statement

## Our Mission

We provide healing-centered programming and community-based support for justice-involved women, creating safe spaces to build resilience and support the reclamation of self.

## Vision Statement

To cultivate a trusted space where justice-involved women reclaim their lives through healing, dignity, and purpose, supported by a collaborative Oversight of judges and community partners.

# Our Guiding Principles

RAMSEY COUNTY JUDGES'  
WOMEN'S GROUP

- **Safety and Stability:** We create a consistent and predictable environment that prioritizes the physical, emotional, and psychological safety of all participants and children.
- **Equity:** We actively work to dismantle systemic barriers and uplift justice-involved women, particularly those from marginalized communities.
- **Dignity and Respect:** Every woman's story matters. We honor lived experiences and approach all interactions with empathy and professionalism.
- **Collaboration:** Our work is shared work. Each advisory oversight contributes unique expertise to support the group's mission.
- **Accountability with Care:** We model the same integrity we seek to inspire—following through on commitments, maintaining boundaries, and communicating transparently.
- **Growth and Learning:** We adapt, reflect, and evolve to meet the changing needs of our participants and community.

# Leadership Framework

The Ramsey County Judges Women's Group operates through a shared leadership model built on collaboration, accountability, and equity. Rather than a traditional hierarchy, the group is guided by an *Advisory Circle* - a small leadership team that governs key areas of operations.

The **Advisory Circle** is responsible for developing and maintaining its area's processes, ensuring clear communication, and supporting consistent implementation across the group.



# About the Judges' Women's Group: Programming Spotlights

- Narcan Education
- Seeking Safety Curriculum
- Housing Outreach and Supports
- Workforce Development
- Alpha Kappa Sorority Hat & Scarf Drive
- We Resolve! Empowering Justice Involved Individuals



# About the Judges' Women's Group: Government Supports

- Office of the Ramsey County Attorney: Volunteer / Facilitator Support
- Ramsey County Community Corrections: Financial and Administrative Support
- Ramsey County Community Corrections: Volunteer / Facilitator Support
- Ramsey County – Saint Paul Public Health: Clinic 555
- Ramsey County – Saint Paul Public Health: Mother's First
- Ramsey County Workforce Solutions: Resume Building
- Ramsey County Contractor Juliet Mitchell: Business Etiquette
- Ramsey County Sheriff's Office: Picnic Support and Community Outreach

# About the Judges' Women's Group: Government Supports

- City of Saint Paul City Attorney's Office: Volunteer / Facilitator Support
- City of Saint Paul Parks & Recreation: Waived permit fees for annual family picnic
- City of Saint Paul Fire Captain Brittany Baker
- Hennepin County Medical Center: Heart Health Education
- Mendota Heights Police Department: Women's Self Defense
- Minnesota Secretary of State: Voting Rights and Responsibilities
- Minnesota's 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District: Volunteer / Facilitator Support
- Minnesota's 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District Court Reporters: Wellness Fair
- State Board of Public Defense – Ramsey County: Volunteers

# About the Judges' Women's Group: Community Supports

- Alpha Kappa Sorority: Hat & Scarf Drive
- Alpha Kappa Sorority: Mental Health Practitioner's Presentation
- Breaking Free: Healing from Sex Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation
- Keystone Community Services
- Legal Rights Center of Minnesota: Expungement Education
- Minnesota Institute of Arts: Giants Exhibit and Employment Opportunities
- Minnesota Black Prosecutors Association
- Pillsbury House: Safety Plans and Domestic Violence
- Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood
- Sound Bowls
- The New Justice Project Minnesota
- Twin Cities Diversity in Practice: Picnic Volunteers
- Volunteer Lawyers Network

The background of the slide is a scenic landscape. On the left, there is a dense forest of trees with autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and green. On the right, a wide river flows through a valley, with a town or city visible in the distance under a bright, hazy sky. The overall lighting is warm and golden, suggesting a sunrise or sunset.

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# Participant Spotlights

# Participant Spotlight: Who We Serve

- The group serves:
  - Justice-involved women residing in Ramsey County.
  - Justice-involved women residing in any county who are on probation to Ramsey County Community Corrections.
  - Women in Ramsey County with justice-involved children.
  - Women in Ramsey County with child protection involvement.
- The group met 47 times in 2025.
- The group served 187 individual Ramsey County residents.
  - 46% of participants were currently or formerly on probation to Ramsey County Community Corrections.

# Participant Spotlight: Fulisha

*“All I had was a hope for a better life. I was in a room full of powerful women. I felt like such a special woman.”*

- Oldest in a six-child single parent household.
- Mother struggled with addiction and mental health issues.
- Child protection involvement both as a child and an adult.
- Achieved seven years of sobriety; experienced relapse when third child was born premature.
- Checked self in to treatment while on probation and involved with child protection.
- Got clean from meth but still struggled with mental health and housing stability.
- Completed dialectical behavioral therapy.
- Regular attendee of the Judge’s group for many years.
- Have achieved stable housing and employment – paying full rent & a manager at work!

# Participant Spotlight: Brenda

*“This group helps me feel purpose. I am helping women that are just like me find their voices; helping them see that it is possible to grow and heal. This group is a game changer. It has helped me grow and change for the better – it has given me the platform to be the best version of myself.”*

- Mother to four - grandmother to many.
- Experience with addiction, incarceration, homelessness.
- Experienced mental, physical and verbal abuse.
- Experience being abused and being an abuser.
- Child protection involvement – removal of children from home.
- Have attended group since October 2022; now part of the Advisory Circle.
- Continue attending and helping women just like me!

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## Recognition and Gratitude



# Recognition and Gratitude

- February 2025 *Minnesota Women's Press* profile.
- October 2024 *Pioneer Press* mention.
- December 2023 *Star Tribune* profile.
- Judge Nicole Starr, Judge Maria Mitchell, and Chief Judge Sara Grewing were awarded a **2025 Minnesota District Judges Foundation Community Service Award** for their work with the group.

# Recognition and Gratitude

“Brenda Roth, a participant, credits the group for helping her confront past trauma and find strength. “The support here has been life-changing,” she says. The weekly gatherings, held at the Wilder Foundation, focus on conversation, healing, and community-building. She wishes this kind of healing had been possible before her incarceration. “Someone who understood that I needed treatment would have helped.”



*Healing Together: A Women’s Support Group  
Transforms Justice in Ramsey County  
Minnesota Women’s Press  
1/29/2025*

# Recognition and Gratitude

“Do you remember last year when our group received coats?”

This morning, after my meditation, I cried. These past seven years have been incredibly rough. Yesterday I worked the Gopher football game, and while getting ready, I thought about everything I’ve been through. The long johns I put on were bought for me by the Women of Nations shelter. The wool socks and waterproof gloves were also provided for me by them. When I first arrived at that shelter, I had nothing like that—I came with only two bags of belongings.

As I put on my winter coat and walked outside, I felt overwhelmed with gratitude. That jacket kept me warm.”

*-Women’s Group Participant*

# Recognition and Gratitude

“We’re not there for the same reasons, but we’re all talking about our day. It helps create the bond and trust. I’m the city attorney, but I am not there on a different level, the way it feels in court. We are together in a circle — all just women and human beings talking.”

- Lindsey Olson, Saint Paul City Attorney

*Healing Together: A Women’s Support Group Transforms Justice in Ramsey County;*  
*Minnesota Women’s Press, 1/29/2025*

"At a recent meeting, a woman who lived in a shelter when she began attending has now held onto her job for a year, managing a gas station," said Starr. "Another woman who was homeless for eight years is finally housed and gets to see her son every week."

- Nicole Starr, 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District Judge

*Ramsey County legal experts help troubled women find their worth*  
*Star Tribune, 12/8/2023*



# Questions & Discussion

