



2020 Judicial Retention Questionnaire

**Donna L. Cooper
Cook County Circuit Judge**

1. State the main reason why voters should return you to the bench.

I have upheld the integrity and independence of the judiciary in my assignment at the Juvenile Justice Division, 6th District Markham IL. I respect and followed the law. I've conducted myself at all times in a manner that promoted confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary. I do what is in the best interest of the minor and treat each one with respect.

2. What actions have you taken as a judge of which you are most proud?

In addition to my juvenile court assignment I am the judge assigned to the newly established Englewood Restorative Justice Community Court. I was raised in Englewood and requested this assignment from the Chief Judge. I have been training in the restorative justice program since August 2019, first observing the Lawndale Restorative Justice Community Court. In November 2019 I began training with community practitioners of restorative justice circle training. In December 2019, I observed the Brooklyn Mental Health Court, the Brooklyn Treatment Court and the Red Hook Community Justice Center in Brooklyn, NY. I trained in Restorative Justice for Cook County Judges from December 19-20, 2019 and January 13-14, 2020 with Retired Judge Sheila Murphy and Professor Michael P. Seng at John Marshall Law School and received certifications of training in restorative justice for both sessions

This court services emerging adults ages 18 -26. I believe in the practice of restorative justice. It is a way to prevent, deter and respond to crime by involving the community and helping the responsible party to understand the harm they've caused and a way to repair it. It allows the harmed party the opportunity to express how they and the community are or were affected. Implementation of this community court required attending community meetings in Englewood, after court hours, to inform the community that: the restorative justice program was coming to their area; to interest them in providing input and participating in the program as community representatives and circle keepers; and to meet with service providers interested in providing wrap around services to the program.

3. Name and describe one change you would make in the Illinois court system.

Other than Traffic Court, my entire judicial career has been spent in the Juvenile Justice Division, my requested assignment. I would like to have Assistant States Attorney and Assistant Public Defender juvenile justice specialist. The juvenile court at Markham has a high turnover rate with the ASAs and APDs assigned to juvenile. I have had over 58 ASA's and 24 PD's assigned to my calendar. Many are new ASAs or APDs. Or experienced attorneys passing time on the way to other assignments. I have requested minimum time commitments for the attorneys or specialists who want to remain in Juvenile. This would be in the best interest of the minors and would promote greater continuity and speedier trials. It is in the best interest of a minor that they do not have a new PD each time that he or she comes to court or an ASA who is unfamiliar with the case.

4. One prominent Illinois judicial evaluation survey asks attorneys to evaluate candidates on Integrity, Impartiality, Legal Ability and Temperament. Critique yourself in these four areas as to how you personally approach your job as a judge?

I conduct myself at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary. (Rule 62) Performing the duties of a judge impartially and diligently. (Rule 63) Avoiding the appearance of impropriety in in judicial activities. (Rule 62)

As a judge I am prepared, punctual and consistent. I review and prepare my court call in advance. I believe in punctuality and I consistently open court on time every day. If I need to open later, I inform the court staff ahead of time. I let all parties, attorneys and other court personnel know what I expect from them in my courtroom and what they can count on from me- which is preparedness, consistently, courtesy, fairness and respectful treatment. I encourage legal research from the attorneys and preform my own. I give new case law that I've found to attorneys that concern our court. I treat all court participants with respect and give them the opportunity to respectfully express their opinions. I have a good judicial temperament giving equitable and respectful treatment to all parties who appear before me. I can be stern, but I always act in a professional manner.