



Public Information Office  
**United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **New Office of Workplace Relations Established to Assist Federal Courts Within the Ninth Circuit**

SAN FRANCISCO – The Ninth Circuit’s new Office of Workplace Relations, which is responsible for preventing and resolving workplace harassment and fostering a positive working environment in the federal courts, is now fully operational with a director and support staff stationed at the circuit headquarters in San Francisco.

Yohance C. Edwards, Esq., hired in January to serve as director of workplace relations, and a workplace relations specialist, Stella Huynh, recently settled into offices in the James R. Browning United States Courthouse, home to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and the regional administrative hub for the federal courts in the western states and Pacific islands.

Mr. Edwards is available to directly assist all judges and court staff in the circuit. He also oversees development of discrimination and sexual harassment training programs for federal trial and bankruptcy courts in the 15 judicial districts within the circuit. His near-term goals include new webpages to provide workplace-related information to the public and judiciary employees.

Materials recently posted online include a significantly revised Employment Dispute Resolution Policy, which sets out processes and practices for resolving workplace matters. The EDR Policy has been adopted by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. All other courts in the circuit, and the Federal Public Defender offices, have either adopted the Ninth Circuit’s revised EDR Policy in its entirety, or have adopted revised local court policies that are substantially similar to the Ninth Circuit’s revised EDR Policy. All revised EDR Policies went into effect on January 1, 2019.

Mr. Edwards also has initiated a survey of EDR coordinators in all courts of the circuit to identify their needs and issues.

“All of us here in the Ninth Circuit are committed to maintaining a healthy and productive workplace. We are very pleased with the progress made to date,” said Ninth Circuit Chief Judge Sidney R. Thomas.

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Mr. Edwards was formerly the associate director and deputy Title IX officer in the Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination at the University of California, Berkeley. Ms. Huynh is a recent law school graduate who previously worked in the Ninth Circuit's public information unit.

The hiring of a director of workplace relations was foremost among the recommendations put forth last year by the Workplace Environment Committee, an ad hoc panel appointed by Chief Judge Thomas to review policies and procedures aimed at maintaining a healthy working environment. The committee based its proposals on input received from more than 3,000 current and former law clerks and other court staff who responded to a wide-ranging workplace questionnaire.

More information about Office of Workplace Relations activities is available at <https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/workplace>.

The U.S. Courts for the Ninth Circuit consists of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the federal trial and bankruptcy courts and related court units in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, the U.S. Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

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