

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON FOR PIERCE COUNTY

SUPERIOR COURT PRESS RELEASE NOVEMBER 8, 2022 JUDGE SCHWARTZ RECEIVES INNOVATING JUSTICE AWARD

Pierce County Superior Court would like to congratulate Judge Michael Schwartz who is one of the recipients of the 2022 Innovating Justice Award. The Board for Judicial Administration (BJA) chairs, Chief Justice Steve Gonzalez and Judge Tam Bui, applauded Judge Schwartz for his efforts in hosting Legal Financial Obligation (LFO) Reconsideration Days in Pierce County. The BJA presented Judge Schwartz with this award at their meeting on October 21, 2022. The counties of Pierce, Thurston, Kitsap along with Washington State Representative Tarra Simmons and her colleagues at Civil Survival, worked collaboratively together to plan county-wide LFO Reconsideration Days at their respective courts. The LFO Reconsideration Days enabled people to come to the court and get help in seeking relief from their LFO debt. Each of the LFO Reconsideration days resulted in millions of dollars of LFO debt waived for individuals who have been unable to pay.

Judge Schwartz also created an ongoing LFO Reconsideration process in Pierce County because of the success of the LFO Reconsideration Day. This new process is in collaboration with Tacomaprobono, the Pierce County Prosecutor's Office, and the Pierce County Department of Assigned Counsel (DAC). Tacomaprobono hosts clinics where citizens and their staff attorneys can fill out paperwork to request a reconsideration of their legal financial obligations. DAC reviews and approves the paperwork and forwards it to the Prosecutor's Office for review and signature. The final review is done by Judge Schwartz. Judge Schwartz says "It's continuing to go on as an on-going project... another great thing about this is people don't have to navigate setting a motion on their own and appearing in court, we make it ex parte. The important thing about this is not just reducing their LFO's but also access to justice, a lot of people don't know where to start."

The Innovating Justice Award recognizes an individual or group for providing exceptional leadership in helping courts deliver innovative and responsive justice using a race equity lens. More about the award and past recipients can be found [here](#). The Board for Judicial Administration press release can be found [here](#).



About Judge Michael Schwartz:

Judge Schwartz was appointed to the Pierce County Superior Court Bench in August, 2015. Prior to his position with Superior Court, Judge Schwartz worked at Harrison, Ladenburg, & Schwartz, as a partner from 1992- 1999. Schwartz was also the owner of Law Office of Michael Schwartz from 1999-2015. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in finance in 1988 from University of Hawaii and then a Juris Doctor from the University of Puget Sound in 1992.

About Pierce County Superior Court:

Pierce County Superior Court is the second largest Superior Court in the State of Washington and is proud to serve the citizens and visitors of Pierce County. The Court is staffed with 23 Judges and 10

Commissioners. There are three sites where court is held; the County-City Building at 930 Tacoma Ave S., Tacoma, Remann Hall Juvenile Court at 5501 6th Ave., Tacoma, and Western State Hospital currently located near the County City Building campus. For more information, please visit our website at <https://www.piercecountywa.gov/122/Superior-Court>.

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