Judges Eligibility Rules (Rules for Judges)

1. The judge’s panel should consist between five (5) and seven (7) individuals. At least one of these individuals should be a “novice” judge. “Novice” is defined as anyone who has never judged a local or state competition within the Miss America system.
2. Judges may judge up to two (2) state competitions and four (4) local competitions in any given “competition/pageant year” - defined as the number of contestants sent to a state competition. This is not a “Calendar year.” Locals are defined by the number of local contestants sent to any state competition. Therefore, if an individual judges a dual or double competition in one state which crowns two (2) winners and a dual or double competition in another state which crowns two (2) winners, that judge has judged the four (4) local competitions.
3. Individuals, their company/business, spouse, immediate family, domestic partner or significant other, who in any way benefit, financially or otherwise, from working with contestants or the organization are barred from judging. This means that a pageant coach, pageant vocal coach, hairdresser, retailer, make-up artist, fitness trainer, wardrobe specialist, interview coach, choreographer, or any other profession which works directly with contestants, may not judge. This also means that a person who works with any contestant may not judge any other contestant, not just the ones with whom they work.

Immediate family is defined as a parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, sibling, aunt, uncle, niece, and nephew, whether by whole or half blood, or by marriage, including step-children, adoption, or natural relation.

1. Individuals who are related to contestants through blood relation, by marriage, through business contacts (including with contestants’ families), or social contacts (including with contestants’ families) may not judge those contestants.
2. State Board Members may not judge locals within the state they serve. It is recognized that some states have rules in place that require the state organization to place judges on first year local competitions. In those cases, the judges placed on those local judge’s panels may not have direct contact with their state contestants or their state judges during the state competition.
3. Relatives of state/local board members may not judge the state/local competition for which the relative serves as a board member. One should also use discretion using any person which could compromise, or appear to compromise, the integrity of the judging process. This includes such relations as business associates, social relationships, etc.
4. Parents and other relatives of a contestant may not judge any state or local competitions.
5. Former contestants and their family members, whether from a local, state, or national Miss America Competition or a competition similar in nature to the Miss America Competition, and regardless if they won one of said competitions, cannot judge until a minimum of three (3) years after they have stopped competing and may never judge any contestant with whom they have competed. “Stopped Competing” is defined as either “ages out”, gets married, won a state title, or otherwise can no longer compete in the Miss America Program. Additionally, using a woman of competition age, even though she may have never competed in the Miss America system, may prove to be a problem if she elects to compete in the program once she has judged. Judges who may be potential contestants, including MAOTeen titleholders, MAOTeen contestants and their family members, are not allowed to judge in any level of the Miss America program until the criteria set forth above is met.
6. A judge may not judge any contestant at the State Competition, whom they judged in any other competition, including but not limited to the MAOTeen Program for a period of four (4) years.  Only at the Local Competition Level may a judge be able to judge a contestant whom they previously judged, however, they must do so with absolute objectivity and without bias.  It is important that the Local Organization’s leadership, to the best of their ability, limit the number of judges who have previously judged the contestants competing in their local competitions.
7. Judges who are related by blood or marriage, romantically involved, business associates, or roommates may not serve on the same judging panel. The reason is that we cannot give the impression that two judges may collude on the panel because of their close relationship.
8. While it is not a violation of the rules to use a person from another competition system, except in the event the person serves, has served, or plans to serve as an official, key position, partner, sponsor, employee, spokesperson or titleholder, discretion is required and the MAO judging process is not used in any way, to promote another competition system, especially in the judges bio.
9. Judges may not judge the same competition two consecutive years. This applies to both local and state competitions.
10. State organizations may not use two individuals from the same state competition in the same year. In addition, state organizations may not use two individuals from the same state competition two consecutive years. At the local level, two individuals from the same local competition may judge another local in the same year, but no members of a local board may judge the same local two consecutive years.
11. The state competition’s judges panel can only include one (1) active MAO state volunteer, including, without limitation, the Executive Director, members of the State Board of Directors (BOD) or Committee, and/or any affiliate BOD, such as a state’s 501c3 Scholarship Organization.
12. Sponsors, partners and contributors (financial or in-kind), as well as their employees and family members are barred from judging.
13. State organizations may have rules regarding local judging which are more restrictive, but not contradictory than the rules mentioned above. In addition to the MAO Judges Eligibility Rules, please be aware that the state organization makes final determination on additional rules regarding judging for its locals. If you have a question regarding the interpretation of these rules as they apply to local competition, please contact your state competition office for clarification.