

Preamble

The quality of justice in Nebraska is enhanced when citizens have accurate information and a reasonable understanding of the workings of their system of justice. Education about the legal process and an understanding of the manner of arriving at legal decisions engenders respect for the operation of the system and for those who practice and interpret the law.

Reports prepared by journalists and disseminated through the media constitute the main and most influential source of news and comment on the justice system. For most people, the only contact that they have with the daily workings of the law is through media reports.

The news media is the court system's conduit to the public. As such, the news media is to be afforded consideration in terms of timeliness of records checks and delivery of information, notwithstanding any other records-check or communications policies or protocol.

Protocol

The clerks and employees of the Nebraska judicial branch regularly respond quickly and courteously to questions from representatives of the news media dealing with factual information having to do with their function as court officers and requests for court records.

- Media inquiries dealing with case status of the date of trials or hearings should be answered by the clerk and/or employees assigned this duty within each trial court.
- If utilized by the court responding to the inquiry, news reporters should be directed to and taught to use the Multi-Court Case Calendar hosted on the Judicial Branch Web site.
- When appropriate, media outlets should be encouraged to subscribe to the JUSTICE court computer system and informed how to subscribe.
- If documents are not available on JUSTICE, items within court files should be faxed, scanned & emailed or otherwise provided to the reporter/media outlet as soon as practical. Unless a specific media is in arrears, documents should be provided with a bill for the cost of the copies.

**Any disputes regarding bill paying should be directed to the Nebraska Supreme Court Public Information Officer for resolution.*

Trial Court Judge Communications

In accordance with the county court presiding judge rule (§ 6-1459 Presiding judges) the presiding judge, or a designee, shall be responsible for public communications regarding their Judicial District. The Supreme Court Public Information Officer is available, upon request, to assist trial courts in initiating and responding to communications through the media. A similar option applies to the presiding or senior judge of district courts in each Judicial District.

The presiding/senior judge of each district, or a designee, should advise the Supreme Court Public Information Officer about any issue of broad public interest within the district.

Trial Court Clerk and Staff Communications

The presiding/senior judge of each judicial district in conjunction with the Office of the State Court Administrator may wish to assign personnel to facilitate public communications for the district. The Supreme Court Public Information Officer is available, upon request, to assist each judicial district in initiating and responding to communications as noted above. Court staff communications facilitators should advise the Supreme Court Public Information Officer about media inquiries within the district.

Expanded Media Coverage (Cameras in the Courtroom)

Media requests to broadcast or take still photos of court proceedings are governed by Nebraska Supreme Court rule §2-118, unless the court is conducting a pilot project on Expanded Media Coverage. (“*Expanded media coverage*” includes broadcasting, televising, electronic recording, or photographing of judicial proceedings for the purpose of gathering and disseminating news to the public.) All courts that have passed rules allowing expanded media coverage (cameras in the courtroom) are found on the Judicial Branch Web site under the “For the Press” menu: <http://supremecourt.ne.gov/press/>

For the purpose of public safety or to minimize disruptions of court operations, the media may be prohibited from conducting on-camera interviews in areas immediately adjacent to courtrooms in accordance with Nebraska Supreme Court rule §2-118. Blanket media bans are discouraged unless found to be absolutely necessary. Media requests to film or photograph in non-public areas, e.g. private offices or employee work areas not located in public areas must be submitted to the resident judge or presiding judge of the Judicial District.