

United States District Court - District of Alaska

General Informational Guide for the Media

Introduction

The Clerk's Office of the United States District Court, District of Alaska has prepared this brochure to foster cooperation between the Court and the media in dealing with public interest trials and Court hearings. To achieve that goal, every reasonable effort to accommodate the media's needs and to provide it with the essential information required to do its job will be made. It is the Clerk's Office intention to treat all members of the media equally and fairly and to assure all media representatives the same degree of access. Specific information and procedures concerning a trial may be implemented by a judge for a particular case.

Building Security

All Courthouse visitors must pass through and clear a metal detector upon entering the Courthouse. Wireless communication devices such as cell phones, pagers, etc., cameras, tape recorders, knives (including pocket knives), and weapons (including mace) are not allowed in the courtroom. There are no provisions for Court Security Officers to hold such items while the owners are in the Courthouse.

Note: Please see brochure entitled "A Question of Security" prepared by the Marshals Service

Clerk's Office

The Office of the Clerk of Court is located in Anchorage in room 229. Regular business hours are between 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday - Friday, excluding holidays. The office is closed from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Courthouse Entry and Exit

At the Anchorage Federal Courthouse, members of the Media are encouraged to enter and exit the Federal Courthouse at the 7th Ave and C St. side of the Building. During high profile trials and Court hearings, the U.S. Marshal's Office may establish an entry and exit procedure from the doors of the Courthouse to the public sidewalk so that everyone entering and leaving the Courthouse is able to do so safely.

Courthouse Locations

The District of Alaska is comprised of five offices in the following locations:

Anchorage

222 West 7th Ave, Rm 229
Anchorage, AK 99513
(907) 677-6100

Fairbanks

101 12th Ave, Rm 332
Fairbanks, AK 99701
(907) 451-5791

Juneau

709 West 9th, Rm 979
Juneau, AK 99802
(907) 586-7458

Ketchikan

648 Mission St. Rm 507
Ketchikan, AK 99901
(907) 247-7576

Nome

U.S. Courthouse Front St.
Nome, AK 99762
(907) 443-5216

Courtroom Decorum

The Court does not have a formal dress code; however, business attire is strongly suggested. At no time is food or drink allowed in the courtroom. Although most judges allow the use of lap top computers in the courtroom during trial, the courtroom deputy should be notified that such equipment will be utilized so that they in turn can advise the judge who will make a determination regarding its use. Other types of wireless devices may not be approved for use in the courtroom due to potential interference with courtroom equipment.

Entry Pass - Limited Media Seating During Trial

In rare instances, due to limited space, Entry Passes may be required for media seating in the courtroom. The number of seats will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the judge hearing the case and will vary, depending upon the number of party members or their family members, victim family members, law enforcement officers, and witnesses in attendance. The deputy U.S. Marshal will ensure that individuals are seated in appropriate designated areas of the courtroom. Everyone must be seated prior to the opening of the Court session as standing in the courtroom is not allowed. At no time is anyone permitted beyond the seating area of the courtroom. Entry Passes will be distributed to members of the media before the scheduled Court proceeding. If an Entry Pass is required, no one will be allowed in the courtroom without one. The Entry Pass will be good for the entire trial.

Equipment

In accordance with the policy adopted by the Judicial Conference of the United States, cameras and other audio and/or video equipment are not permitted in the Courthouse area occupied by the District Court except for special Court hearings and with prior Court approval. There is no provision for storage of equipment at the Courthouse.

Exhibits

When an exhibit such as a video or audio tape is sought by the media, the request is to be made to the Clerk of Court or the designated liaison who will consult with the judge to determine whether such exhibits may be made available to the media and, if necessary, the manner in which the exhibits will be made available. The media is not to contact the judge's chambers or the courtroom deputy clerk to obtain copies of any exhibits.

File Information

All pending civil and criminal cases may be viewed, at no charge, in the clerk's office. There is a charge for copies, certifications, and exemplifications. Case files and dockets may usually be obtained on the same day as requested unless the requested material is unavailable. The case number will identify the correct Court division in which the file is located and the district judge and magistrate judge before whom the matter is pending. To identify which Court division maintains the case file, refer to the prefix of the case number as follows:

A=Anchorage, F=Fairbanks, J=Juneau, K=Ketchikan and N=Nome. Next is a two digit indicator of the Year the case was filed. Following the Year is a hyphen and the sequential four digit case number. The abbreviation CV= Civil and CR=Criminal. This is followed by the initials of the Judge assigned to the case.

For example:A04-0011-CV(JWS) indicates that this case was filed in Anchorage (A), filed in the year 2004 (04) is case number eleven (11), a Civil case (CV) and has been assigned to Chief Judge John W. Sedwick (JWS).

Information for a future Trial or Hearing

One day advance and current day information regarding a trial or hearing is available on the Court's website at <http://www.akd.uscourts.gov>

Local Rules

The media should familiarize itself with Local Civil Rule 83.1 & 83.3 pertaining to conduct in the courtroom; specifically, the prohibition of broadcasting, televising and photographing. The Local Rules are attached and also available on the Court's website.

Media Communications with the Court

The Court has designated the Clerk of Court or his designee to serve as Press Liaison for disseminating information on scheduling, seating, Court procedures, and logistics in a particular case. Should there be a need to contact the Court on any issues pertaining to or affecting the media as a whole, please contact the Clerk of Court. No one should telephone a judge's chambers or the courtroom deputy clerk but should address all questions to the Clerk of Court. Please be advised that the Clerk of Court may designate a specific individual to answer questions regarding a particular case or proceeding.

Orders

When the judge issues an order and the media is requesting an immediate copy, the Clerk or the designated liaison will make the necessary arrangements for the media to obtain a copy which may include posting a copy of the order on the court's website [<http://www.akd.uscourts.gov>] under the category entitled "Chambers-published documents". Every effort will be made to ensure that the order is provided in a timely manner in accordance with the judge's instructions. The media is not to contact the judge's chambers or the courtroom deputy clerk to obtain a copy of the order.

Sketch Artists

Courtroom artists and others must notify the courtroom deputy clerk in order to obtain judicial approval before sketching is permitted in the courtroom. Sketch artists are prohibited from drawing detailed sketches of jurors.

Transcripts

Civil and criminal transcripts may be ordered through the Court. There is a charge for all transcripts. The Front Counter clerk will provide you with a Transcript Request form.

Trial Date and Time

Each judge's calendar may vary; however, trial is generally held Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to noon and from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. with a 15 minute break during each session. For further information, consult the master calendar on the Court's website or the electronic calendar information on the Court's kiosk.

Website

For general information about District of Alaska, including directions and maps to the Court locations, visit the Court's website at <http://www.akd.uscourts.gov>

wpdocs\project\public\media plan4a.wpd