

Media Information

MEDIA RELATIONS AND THE COURTS

The court staff is here to help you in whatever way they can. Their role is to provide you with information, not legal help. They have been instructed to not answer questions if they do not know the answer, or if your question requires advice or opinions instead of factual information. They may refer you to other resources to help you more effectively.

MEDIA LIAISON

Presiding Judge Brown has appointed the Circuit Court Administrator Heather Covey as the **media liaison** for high profile cases in this judicial circuit. She is the central contact person for all media inquiries that are not document-specific in a given case or are not general procedural matters. She can be reached at 605-773-3712, or at 104 E Capitol Avenue, Pierre. She may also be present from time to time at the local courthouse.

Requests for **access to documents** in a case file should be directed to the local clerk of court's office. The clerk will inform you of costs for copying or conducting records searches.

DECORUM

Media representatives are expected to **present a neat appearance** in keeping with the dignity of the court and be sufficiently familiar with court proceedings to conduct themselves so as not to interfere with the dignity of the proceedings, or to distract counsel or the court. All media personnel shall be properly attired.

The presiding judge may make special rules as to **where interviews may be conducted** in or around the courthouse. This may change from time to time depending on the nature of the case. Generally, interviews of parties, counsel, witnesses, or the general public are not allowed on the same floor as the courtroom nor in the clerk's office. Check with the Media Liaison if you are not sure where to proceed.

All seats in the courtroom are open to the public. The judge may designate special assigned seating for media but is not required to do so.

Reporters or other media personnel will not be allowed to impede the movement of people, witnesses, and the defendant(s) in and out of the courthouse or the courtroom. This may include areas near stairwells or

elevators, certain interior office doorways, or entrances/exits to the building itself. This applies to interviews and reporting.

CAMERAS, EQUIPMENT IN THE COURTROOM

Cameras, video equipment, and recording devices are allowed in the courtroom only upon order of the judge presiding. Further information can be found [here](#). Use of media equipment/devices is not allowed immediately outside the courtroom or on the same floor as the courtroom, but can be carried by media staff to the floor where the courtroom is located, for convenience.

Cell phones, pagers, beepers, smart phones or similar electronic devices must be turned off before entering the courtroom, and are not to be activated in the courtroom.

FEES

Publicly accessible information is free; there is a fee for photocopy and fax services, however. Payments are accepted at the time the service is provided, unless you have an established charge account with the Unified Judicial System. To request an account be set up for you, please contact Jill Gusso, the UJS Public Information Officer, at 773-4874 in Pierre.

Copy fees vary depending on state or county-owned equipment. The cost is usually \$.20/page.

A record search fee may apply if you do not have a file number for the case or person you are inquiring about and are not a party to the case. That fee ranges from \$5-\$20.