

# A GUIDE TO IOWA'S EXPANDED NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE RULES

## Two important reminders for covering state court proceedings in Iowa:

- Reporters covering public hearings and trials with just a notebook and pen DO NOT need permission from the judicial officer to be in the courtroom.
- But if you want to use a video camera, still photo camera, audio recorder, laptop computer or smart phone, or if you want to send live texts, blog posts, Tweets or live-stream the proceedings you MUST have advance approval from the judge.

## HOW TO REQUEST PERMISSION FOR EXPANDED MEDIA ACCESS

### For initial appearance in criminal cases:

- You must make a written or oral request for expanded media coverage to the judicial officer presiding over the initial appearance in advance of the start of the proceeding.
- You must be in place at least 15 minutes before the scheduled time for the hearing.
- The prosecutor, defendant or defendant's attorney may object to expanded news media coverage.
- If you want to use expanded media coverage for later hearings in the case or the trial, you must submit another request through the regional media coordinator.

### For all other civil or criminal proceedings:

- You must submit a request to the regional media coordinator at least 7 days in advance of the proceeding (or, if the proceeding is not scheduled at least 7 days in advance, as soon as practicable after the proceeding is scheduled).
- You must be in place at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled start time of the proceeding.
- The regional media coordinator will notify the parties of your request, and the parties or witnesses may object to expanded media coverage.

### For Supreme Court, Court of Appeals proceedings:

- You must ask the appellate court media coordinator to file a written request, and the coordinator needs to file the written request no later than the Friday immediately preceding the week in which the oral argument is to be held.
- You must be in place in the courtroom at least 15 minutes before the scheduled time of the proceeding.
- Remember, authorization for expanded media coverage of appellate proceedings must be requested separately from the earlier proceedings.

## EXPANDED MEDIA PROHIBITIONS

**You cannot use expanded news coverage tools or techniques for these proceedings. Violations can lead to sanctions being imposed by the judge.**

- Voir dire (jury selection).
- Photos or video of jurors, except to the extent it is unavoidable in covering other trial participants. But coverage of the jury's verdict shall be permitted.
- Any court proceeding that Iowa law requires to be held in private.
- Victim witness testimony in sexual abuse cases (unless the victim witness consents).
- Testimony by any other witness when prohibited by order of the judicial officer.
- Juvenile court, dissolution of marriage, adoption, child custody or trade secret cases (unless consent on the record is obtained from all parties, including a parent or guardian of a minor child).
- Conferences between lawyers and their clients, between lawyers, between lawyers and judge (at the bench or in chambers) or between judicial officers in an appellate proceeding.

## TECHNICAL RULES YOU MUST FOLLOW

- All news media personnel must wear identification with name and affiliation.
- Cameras, computers, audio devices must be unobtrusive and not produce distracting sound.
- Flash or supplemental lights are not allowed.
- Video cameras must be designed or modified so people cannot know when recording occurs.
- News media must demonstrate to the judicial officer that their equipment complies with court rules.
- News media personnel cannot move about the courtroom when proceedings are under way and must maintain proper decorum at all times.
- Cellphones cannot be used for calls and pagers must be turned off in the courtroom.

## GROUND RULES FOR MEDIA POOLS

**Iowa Court Rules state that no more than 5 members of the news media can use expanded media coverage equipment — still cameras, video cameras, audio recorders and other electronic devices — in the courtroom during a hearing or trial. That means pooling may be required when more media representatives want access.**

- The regional media coordinator, in consultation with the executive director of the Iowa FOI Council (who is appointed by the Supreme Court to serve as the central coordinator for expanded media coverage in Iowa), will assemble such pools from among media organizations requesting access for such coverage.
- Representatives of news media are responsible for contributing to photo or video pool coverage of judicial proceedings when necessary. If a news organization is incapable of contributing to pool coverage, the regional media coordinator may allow the news organization to share in the pool coverage or may restrict the news organization's participation in expanded media coverage.
- The regional media coordinator shall serve as the liaison between the participating news organizations and court employees during the proceedings on expanded news media coverage matters. All questions about pool arrangements shall be directed to the regional coordinator. The presiding judge or other court personnel will not be asked to mediate any disputes about pool arrangements.
- Compliance with the Supreme Court rules shall be of paramount importance for all news organizations participating in expanded news media coverage.
- It is the policy of the Iowa FOI Council, as the central coordinator for expanded media coverage, that media organizations wanting to receive video or still photos from the pools must have a representative present at the courthouse to receive photos or video unless other arrangements are made with the pool photo/video provider that day.
- It is the policy of the Iowa FOI Council that participants in video pools must be able to shoot broadcast quality, high-definition video.



## IMPORTANT TIPS

- Make sure your expanded media coverage request is submitted to the regional media coordinator in a timely manner. Do not wait until the last minute.
- If possible, work with the regional media coordinator and appropriate court staff well in advance of the day of the hearing or trial to discuss equipment placement, the ground rules and courtroom decorum.
- Check the courtroom well in advance of the trial or hearing for electrical outlets, lights, the need for extension cords and other equipment.
- If you ask for, and receive, authorization for expanded media coverage for a trial, you need to notify the regional media coordinator if your coverage plans change.
- If a change of venue is ordered for a trial in which you want to use expanded media coverage, check with the regional coordinator where the case originated to learn whether he/she will handle ENMC matters or whether those will be handled by the regional coordinator for the new county.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- You can find the full text of Chapter 25 of the Iowa Court Rules, which govern expanded news media coverage, at:

**<https://tinyurl.com/ybrkjp2f>**

- The names of the regional media coordinators and the appellate media coordinator, along with their contact information and the counties each regional coordinator serves, are at:

**<https://tinyurl.com/ycaotxln>**

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