

Policy: Media Access Policy	Policy No.: 2-A-1
Date Adopted: October 16, 2003	Date(s) Revised: December 21, 2006
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I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish protocol with regards to print and broadcast coverage of the Superior Court of California, County of Sacramento. For media protocol in coverage of juvenile proceedings, please refer to Local Rule, Chapter 19 – Juvenile and Family Courts Exchange of Information and Juvenile Court Confidentiality and Media Policies.

II. Introduction

One of the goals of the Bench-Bar-Media Committee of the Sacramento Superior Court is to form a collaborative partnership with the community and the news media to assist them in understanding the functions of the judicial process, including:

- To assist the media and public in maintaining their basic right of access to civil and criminal proceedings;
- To educate and inform the public about the role and function of the court and the legal system;
- To establish a communications structure to inform the public about court-related developments;
- To ensure fair, complete and accurate reporting on the courts;
- To assist the news media representatives to carry out their responsibilities to inform the public; and
- To accommodate media coverage with the least disruption to court proceedings.

III. Media Contact Information

The Court's Public Information Office may be contacted at 916-591-0050.

IV. Access to Records

One of the policies of the Sacramento Superior Court is to provide appropriate information in a timely manner and to assure appropriate access to records. Most court records are open and are available to the public and media. Some files may contain sealed documents or references to documents that are not open to the public. Access to the sealed documents within court records would require an order from the court. If you believe that you have been denied access to documents that should be open to the

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public, please contact the Court Executive Office and/or the Public Information Office immediately so that we may respond to your concerns.

V. Photographing, Recording, or Broadcasting Inside the Courtroom

Pursuant to California Rule of Court, Rule 1.150, media requests to photograph, record, and broadcast civil and criminal court proceedings (which may include pooled coverage, filming while court is not in session and control of electronics) are at the discretion of the judicial officer presiding over the proceeding.

1. Procedure to File Request to Photograph, Record, and Broadcast.

The Judicial Council forms, MC-500, *Media Request to Photograph, Record, or Broadcast* and MC-510 “*Order on Media Request to Permit Coverage*” are available on the court’s web site at www.saccourt.com. A Rule 1.150 request and order may be filed by fax at (916) 874-8229.

2. Timeliness of Filing Request

The request form, along with a completed, signed order shall be filed at least five court days before the portion of the proceeding to be covered, unless good cause is shown. (See California Rule of Court, 1.150 (e)(1)).

VI. Photographing, Recording, or Broadcasting Outside the Courtroom

Special requests to film jury rooms or employee work areas in the court shall follow the same procedures outlined in Section V – *Photographing, Recording, or Broadcasting Inside the Courtroom*. All such requests shall be directed to the Sacramento Superior Court Public Information Office and the Court Executive Office. The request shall include the time estimate for filming. Time estimates will be enforced. Work area is defined as a non-public area of the courthouse where employees are performing their job functions.

Television and still photographers may film in public areas of the courthouse, so long as they are not impeding the conduct of court business. It is the intent of the court to protect the privacy of its employees and those members of the public using court services; therefore, media representatives shall use reasonable efforts to notify the Public Information Office of their intent to photograph, record, or broadcast. The Public Information Office will notify the Unit Supervisor who will announce to the employees and customers what area the media intends to photograph so that those who do not wish to be photographed may move aside.

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VII. Obstruction of Traffic Due to Media

At no time shall any grouping of people in any hallway, entrance or exit become so large as to obstruct pedestrian traffic. On occasion, the media and public interest in court proceedings is so great as to produce disruptive conditions of noise and crowding in and around court facilities which impedes access to the court and impairs the ability of the court to discharge its functions. Pursuant to California Rules of Court, 1.150(e)(4), the Presiding Judge may issue a standing order that will assist the Judicial Officers to limit the occupancy of the public corridors in court facilities immediately adjacent thereto, and to limit and control the behavior of persons gathered therein, when the circumstances indicate that the operations of the court, or public access to the court, are being disrupted or are about to be disrupted by congestion or disturbance due to the presence of the media. Before limiting the activities of members of the news media within the courthouse, or in the areas immediately adjacent to the court building within the courthouse grounds, the court shall give such notice as is practical in the circumstances to all identifiable news media members who may be affected by an order under this section of the policy, and offer them an opportunity to make a showing that the proposed order is unnecessary, or should be modified. Nothing in this section of the policy is intended to impact the procedures established in the California Rules of Court Rule 1.150. Any party aggrieved by an order made pursuant to this section of the policy may apply to the court to modify the order, or to be exempted from it, by making a request in writing to the judge who issued the order, or to the Presiding Judge, if the judge who issued the order is not available.

VIII. Cases of High Interest

If a case receives attention from a number of media agencies, a media plan will be developed by the Public Information Office and approved by the assigned judicial officer for that particular case.

IX. Responsibility for Rules

Each media agency shall be responsible for ensuring that all its media personnel who cover the court proceeding know and follow the provisions of this policy, Rule 1.150 of the California Rules of Court, and any applicable court orders.

Pursuant to California Rules of Court, Rule 1.150(f) Any violation of this rule or an order made under this rule is an unlawful interference with the proceedings of the court and may be the basis for an order terminating media coverage, a citation for contempt of court, or an order imposing monetary or other sanctions as provided by law.

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X. Media Inquiries

The Public Information Office and Court Executive Office respond to inquiries from the media. Facts are gathered as quickly as possible and provided to the inquirer, as appropriate. If the requested facts are not known, are not appropriate for release, or are otherwise unavailable, the inquirer will be informed of such.