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| **Checklist of the Roles and Responsibilities for Presiding Judge, Court Administrator, Public Information Officer, Information Technology, and Court Security** | Presiding Judge | Court Administrator | Public Information Officer | Information Technology | Court Security |
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| **Preplanning - Proactively develop plan and conduct routine training** |
| **Administrative** |
| Annually conduct training for judicial officers and court employees on working with the public and media, public access to court documents, handling high pro-file cases, court security, and the important contribution of every court employee in representing the Judiciary. \*Public information officers are highly trained in these areas and should be utilized whenever available. Many states have public information officers in their state administrative office available to help courts without dedicated public information officers.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Prepare and routinely review Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). |  |  |  |  |  |
| Draft an administrative order establishing rules governing the use of cell phones and other electronic devices by staff, media, and the general public. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Draft an administrative order establishing rules on how high profile cases will generally be conducted. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Jury** |
| Ensure Jury Management System can accommodate high profile cases, which require longer jury selection processes and larger jury panels. Careful consideration should be given to JMS’ ability to merge multiple panels and produce specially numbered seating charts. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Media** |
| Create ongoing educational opportunities to communicate with the media.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Meet with the media to discuss special needs, demands of high profile cases.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Be vigilant at all times looking for potentially high profile cases being filed in your court. High profile cases also may also come from neighboring courts as change-of-venue cases. |  |  |  |  |  |
| A PIO typically has a good sense of what is newsworthy. Sometimes high profile cases are easy to spot because there has been an arrest of a public figure, for example. Other times an early alert might be contacts from the media from out-of-the-area news reporters or national media. When a PIO identifies what appears to be a high profile matter headed to their court, they should notify the chief judge, court administrator, and clerk of court early on so preparations can begin. It is helpful if the court already has a plan for high profile matters that it can turn to for guidance (COOP). |   |   |   |   |   |
| Establish a definition for “media” and “new media.” |  |  |  |  |  |
| Establish a policy governing how interviews are conducted at the courthouse. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Research ability of social media, particularly Twitter, to provide updates to the media on cases of interest. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Determine whether the issuance of media credential/authorization badges is an acceptable, viable option in your jurisdiction. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Maintain updated media distribution lists. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Security/Facility** |
| Develop a close working relationship with agencies handling court security, including the sheriff’s office and court house security. High profile cases require increased security, including more intense screening of larger crowds. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Technology** |
| High profile cases tax computer networks and infrastructure. Data delivery means are becoming increasingly complex, consuming more bandwidth and resources. Update network, AV equipment whenever possible. |  |  |  |  |  |
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| **Venue Selection – Process of confirming the case is proceeding at this location** |
| **Administrative** |
| Identify where the case is in the court process. |   |   |   |   |   |
| Identify members of the Leadership Team (presiding judge, court administrator, public information officer at a minimum) taking into consideration needs, authority, and skillsets. |   |   |   |   |   |
| Convene a Leadership Team meeting to evaluate the potential scope of public and media interest as early in the course of the case as possible. Identify what role each member of the Leadership Team is to fulfill and exchange emergency contact information among the team members. |   |   |   |   |   |
| Set a Leadership Team meeting to assess skillset of staff, available resources and expertise, security, and facility assets and limitations to begin drafting a plan.  |   |   |   |   |   |
| Presiding judge to determine personal communication protocols: Does he/she want to be advised of media concerns that might arise during a trial, how does s/he like to communicate (email, in person, by phone), etc. The judge in particular will have many pressures and little free time during a high profile case, so these are important discussions to have. The preferred practice will vary from judge to judge and court to court, so it is important to have this discussion every time there is a new high profile case assignment. |   |   |   |   |   |
| Assemble and review documentation on relevant state/local rules and orders, statutes, case law, and expertise available. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Determine if the court has the ability to address fair trial issues in the court location. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Discussions between chief judge, court administrator, public information officer and potential presiding judge(s) to determine case assignment. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Consider appointing one judicial officer to handle all the court proceedings and a second to handle logistical issues. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Jury** |
| Coordinate with the jury department to ensure adequate summonsing of jurors, whether in venue or change of venue location.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Media** |
| Establish a local media committee that will hash out issues, such as determination of pool camera, specific logistical needs for media, i.e. staging, cabling, etc. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Determine if additional space is needed for the media, i.e. “media village.” There are two approaches: the court meets with appropriate owners to facilitate contract negotiations between them and the media or the media is solely responsible for making all arrangements. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Security/Facility** |
| Court security to conduct a full security assessment of facilities, logistical resources, and manpower, then report to Leadership Team (Link to Ct Security page). |  |  |  |  |  |
| Assess impact to judicial or staff parking due to increased traffic flow at the courthouse. Create special signage, if necessary. |  |  |  |  |  |
| If case is controversial, establish protest zones for pro and con groups. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Technology/Website** |
| IT team to perform assessment of available technology identifying additional infrastructure and equipment needed to facilitate a high profile trial. (Link to IT page) |   |   |   |   |   |
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| **Pretrial – Marked by episodic events, short in duration usually lasting less than an hour up to three days** |
| **Administrative** |
| Leadership Team to become familiar with roles and responsibilities of presiding judge, court administrator, public information officer, IT, and court security. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Leadership Team to identify members of the High Profile Team, then convene a meeting of the team. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Leadership Team to identify one person to coordinate between the presiding judge and the multitude of others individuals and organizations, optimally a trained public information officer if available. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Leadership Team to develop and put into action a comprehensive written high profile case business and logistical plan to minimize impact on court personnel, public, and the court facility; meet case processing, records management, and public access needs; incorporate a plan for back-up staff; outline communication expectations and responsibilities; and minimize the impact on those conducting routine business with the court. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Leadership Team needs to develop a comprehensive work schedule to outline primary and secondary persons responsible for issuing credentials and seating passes, and ensures security checkpoints are adequate.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Draft and issue decorum and pretrial publicity orders. These should immediately be made available to the media and the public. Subsequent versions can be issued, but it is important to get the basics outlined and communicated to the media. (Link to PJ page) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Logistical responsibilities turned over to court administrator, public information officer, information technology, and court security to allow presiding judge to turn full attention to the case. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Identify and strategize funding and budgetary considerations. Investigate availability of state and local resources to supplement court resources. |  |  |  |  |  |
| When scheduling allows, prepare and distribute logistical memos via e-mail and post on the website 7-10 days prior to each proceeding. Distribute a draft to each external partner for their input as this will be their link to the media as well. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Conduct logistics meetings prior to each initial proceeding as needed by the court and as requested by the media. Coordinate with other public information officers involved in the case from the county, law enforcement, and town as appropriate. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Determine signage that needs to be posted in and outside of the courtroom, parking lot, staging area, etc. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The public information officer also plays an important role in conveying the presiding judge’s customs and practices in addition to information that appears in a decorum order. Examples include the presiding judge’s practices regarding what time the court convenes in the morning, when breaks typically are taken and the general evening recess time. Another is informing the media of the presiding judge’s expectation that when the media exits the courtroom they only may re-enter during one of the court’s natural breaks. The media is very appreciative of this type of information ahead of time. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Monitoring the stress levels of the presiding judge and staff throughout the course of the case is important. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Identify and strategize funding and budgetary considerations. Investigate availability of state and local resources to supplement court resources. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Leadership Team to debrief with staff after each pre-trial proceeding in preparation for the next. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Meet with High Profile Team to develop plan for delivery of verdict. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Jury** |
| Communicate and coordinate with the jury manager/commissioner if a jury trial is to take place. Considerations: exposure to pre-trial publicity, juror return rates, size of jury, issues in the case, and when jury panels need to be ordered. It is important to develop an information sheet for the media on the procedures for summonsing jurors in the court system. |  |  |  |  |  |
| If juror names are to be made available, develop a plan on how the list will be made public.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Coordinate with court security for jurors entering and exiting the courtroom/house as well as during breaks. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Meet with presiding judge to determine if jury will be sequestered. If so, staff will need to develop a juror packet to obtain vital juror information, such as medical needs, dietary restrictions, activity preferences, emergency contact information, etc. Packet should also include information for jurors, such as a checklist of the things they need to do before being sequestered (need to forward mail, find pet sitters, get additional medicine, etc.); a list of things they need to bring with them (prescriptions, insurance information, doctor’s contact information, etc.); and what jurors can expect while they are sequestered. |  |  |  |  |  |
| If jury is sequestered, extensive planning will need to be coordinated with security personnel to ensure proper logistical needs, such as laundry, haircuts, attendance to religious services, as well as any entertainment opportunities. Sequestered juries lose an average of one juror per week, which can be lessened by providing jurors with additional comforts whenever possible. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Coordinate with area restaurants to see if jurors can be taken out on various occasions. Make sure restaurants can offer meals at per diem rates set by the state/county. |  |  |  |  |  |
| If trial is scheduled to last for an extended period of time, make arrangements for family to visit jurors at the sequestered location. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Jurors cannot be transported about easily while sequestered. For this reason, it is essential to set up how jurors can purchase personal items, i.e. special toiletries, snacks, etc. It is important to develop a protocol whereby money is exchanged to ensure appropriate chain of command. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Meet with judge to determine if jurors will have access to personal phones, electronic devices, TV viewing, internet, etc. Plan accordingly. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Meet with the clerk’s office or other entity to determine how juror payments will be disbursed. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Media** |
| Tap your local media association(s) to act as your ‘broker’ in dealing with logistical matters or if necessary, take steps to organize and facilitate a meeting for the media to form a consortium. Share with members of the media the court’s expectations regarding decorum, courtroom seating, pool distributions, bull pens, workspace availability, and any other matters relating to the media’s operations and conduct. A media consortium should only be used when the sheer number of reporters makes the public information officer unable to deal with the volume on an individual basis. The effectiveness of consortiums varies depending upon the individuals involved. If you have an established media committee it also can be a good resource to utilize. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Set clear rules and expectations in writing, preferably through an administrative order, regarding the use of cell phones inside and other electronic devices and out of the courtroom, simultaneous broadcasting from the courtroom such as Twitter or tweeting from the courtroom, and cell phone cameras in the courthouse and in the courtroom. Clearly communicate the ground rules to the media. Post these on the court’s website, make certain every member of the media is fully aware of the rules and reinforce the message often. Clearly spell out repercussions for violators of the rules, such as revocation of media credentials, removal from the premises, and loss of courtroom seating privileges. Enforce the rules equally and fairly with all members of the media. |  |  |  |  |  |
| You may want to draft a media consent form members of the media sign, acknowledging receipt of media orders. If issuing credentials, the consent form easily can be incorporated into this process.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Some courts require that cell phones be collected at the courtroom door. If this rule is in place, arrangements will need to be made for collection and storage of the devises.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Defining ‘media’ and ‘news organization’ has become a significant issue for high profile cases. The court’s definition of ‘media’ and ‘news organization’ is particularly important in regard to seat allocation and pool feed distribution. Many courts set a low threshold in defining media to include bloggers, special interest groups with websites or a social media presence, novelists, and traditional and non-traditional journalists. A territorial distinction also exists in terms of defining ‘news organization’ which includes the major networks, newspapers, radio, and magazine conglomerates.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Budgetary controls for media accommodations: Expenses the media typically bears are installation of extra phone lines; all expenses related to the off-site locations and accommodations; sanitation needs; still and video pool camera distributions; auxiliary listening rooms if additional facilities (such as trailers) need to be brought in; any necessary city/county permits; and all expenses to run sound/video to auxiliary listening facilities. Taxpayer funds should not pay for these extra expenses that are incurred by private media companies |  |  |  |  |  |
| If a media center is set up, the consortium or the media is responsible for all related expenses, such as rental of a copy machine and any other temporary equipment or services the media may need. The public information officer should be informed of the media’s plans regarding the media center’s use and may assist in meeting the media’s connectivity and other technical needs so long as any additional expenses are paid for by the media. The public information officer, court administrator, or information technology will need to provide oversight to approve, reject or help find viable options for getting the center set up. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Develop internal and external communications plans to regularly communicate with staff and the media. |   |   |   |   |   |
| Public information officer to prepare and provide media training to all judicial officers and court staff: As the court’s point of contact with the media, the public information officer will immediately take steps to ensure judges and court staff are aware of the public information officer’s role by providing his/her contact information, outlining the services s/he can provide, explaining how the media operate including what the media ‘really’ needs vs. what they say the need, conducting employee high profile case training, and working with the judicial staff to coordinate duties as well as the release of any and all information (One Court, One Voice). |  |  |  |  |  |
| Provide courthouse and courtroom media access for site evaluations, setup and removal of equipment. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Designate the public information officer to act as the court’s point-of-contact for county, town and law enforcement in dealing with day-to-day media-related matters. The public information officer should establish a shared communication network that typically is created for such events. This will assure that all groups that play a role in coordinating aspects of the trial and its impact on the community are receiving and communicating the same message. It is important to present a unified front when working with the media to avoid duplication and providing conflicting information. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The public information officer and information technology to act as the primary liaisons with the media for courtroom wiring, cameras, sound, distribution points, cabling, and daily pool camera monitoring. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The court also may facilitate a closed circuit broadcast of the trial in an overflow courtroom. If no rooms are available in the courthouse, alternative options may need to be considered in trailers or adjacent buildings. Generally, if expenses are incurred in securing an auxiliary room the media is responsible. It is important that provisions be made to ensure that all terms of the decorum order be enforced in any auxiliary room as they would be in the courtroom. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Parking for the media and satellite trucks is a formidable challenge in nearly every court location. Work with court security and local law enforcement authorities to help secure parking in a location that will not impede normal traffic flow, is agreeable to local officials, and does not interfere with other court business. Be aware that if the pool audio/video feeds need to cross a street to reach the distribution box the decision as to whether it will go overhead on poles, in troughs placed on top of the surface or installed underground will be a significant consideration due to the height clearance implications, impediment to traffic flow, safety and expense. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Be aware that the media may want to set up or build permanent or semi-permanent platforms for live television broadcasts. Issues to consider include: the impact on court operations, are there local ordinances prohibiting such structures, will they be semi-permanent or removed after each proceeding, do they require building permits, where will they be located and how many will be allowed, who will determine who gets a spot and what spot do they get if limited space is available, and are there power sources easily available or will lines need to be run either on overhead poles or through troughs in the street. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Determine if it is necessary to credential members of the media and issue badges: The primary reasons for credentialing are to limit access to specific areas, accountability as credentials are revocable, and security. Many law enforcement agencies have the capability of producing photo credentials that can be utilized. There is technology available in some metropolitan court locations that use bar coded credentials. These allow identified persons through security and will automatically tell officers when all the seats are occupied.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Typically, the media will want pool camera locations both inside and outside of the court. Consult with the presiding judge, local administration and security to provide the media with the rules they must follow prior to the start of the trial if this logistical issue is not addressed in a decorum order. The rules likely will be different for operation inside the courthouse and outside the courthouse. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Work with the court security, other court staff, and the presiding judge to secure pool camera locations both inside and out of the court if allowed by the presiding judge and court rules. Outside potential cameras must be set up far enough away from the front entrance so as not to impede ingress or egress. |  |  |  |  |  |
| If no cameras will be allowed in the courtroom, the public information officer should facilitate discussions relating to access for a courtroom artist. The media will bear the expenses and arrange for the artist. The court will be asked to provide seats in a location close to the front of the courtroom so the artist has a clear view of all participants. When determining the number of seats available in the courtroom space for the artist will need to be a consideration. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The distribution of documents on days of proceedings can present a challenge even when the documents also are posted on the court’s website. Electronic access may not be available to members of the media and public on location observing the case. The two most obvious options are: 1. The court makes copies to distribute; or 2. A copy of the document is given to the media consortium coordinator for duplication and distribution. As connectivity issues decline, more members of the media can readily access documents on their portable electronic devices. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Work with the presiding judge, court reporter, and courtroom staff to develop a policy for providing exhibits entered into evidence to the media on the day they are entered. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Provide the media with instructions on how to obtain court transcripts. |  |  |  |  |  |
| If the case involves alleged victims whose names will need to be deleted, voices altered, or witness’ faces obscured, all this must be worked out far in advance of the proceeding. Typically, a delayed audio/video signal will allow the pool camera technicians to do the editing. This is one of the areas where depending upon professionals experienced in court coverage who have a reputation to uphold is a good move if possible. Their livelihood depends upon covering the courts today, tomorrow and well into the future. Their engineers know what questions to ask and know what not to do. No matter who it is, however, your specific requirements should be outlined in writing and given to every technician working in and out of the courtroom. If the court is providing the feed, it will need to take the appropriate steps to ensure that all the issues are addressed internally. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Compile a list of local attorneys, professors, or other authorities willing to assist the media. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Security/Facility** |
| Court security to identify, adapt/install security modifications for high profile case and court complex including identifying and fencing restricted areas of the courthouse grounds. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Collaborate with law enforcement to establish fenced areas to separate reporters, cameras, the public, parties to the case, and an area where demonstrations might occur. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Assess if there is adequate space available in the courtroom to accommodate the anticipated number of members of the media, public and parties to the case. Inventory courthouse and adjacent areas for overflow options in the immediate area for auxiliary listening room(s), media center, and media workspace. Restrictions may need to be considered depending upon the size of the available area such as “one person per news organization.” |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ensure adequate crowd and traffic control resources are in place on trial days. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Monitor and enforce all aspects of the decorum order, court rules and regulations: Oversight of media in the courthouse and courtroom to include monitoring of live streaming, overflow room, and equipment rooms. Monitoring the courthouse and courtroom will be a full-time job to ensure compliance with the rules set out for the facility and the presiding judge. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Always remember, ultimately the Leadership Team must approve final courtroom seating areas to the parties, public, and media. |  |  |  |  |  |
| If courtroom seating is insufficient, decide how passes will be distributed on proceeding days. This includes public, media and passes for parties to get through security. One important consideration is ensuring local media are guaranteed seats. Approaches consortiums and courts have taken are assigning the seats through consensus, random draw, or first in line each day. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Technology/Website** |
| Information technology to upgrade technology and infrastructure as needed. (link to IT page) |  |  |  |  |  |
| A case specific website is highly recommended. Publish all relevant information on the website including: case documents; frequently updated trial schedules; logistics updates; decorum orders, pretrial publicity orders and media rules; the presiding judge’s biography; courthouse and courtroom access information; rules for electronic devices in the courthouse and the courtroom; contact information for all public information officers from the various agencies managing the case; contact information for counsel; and logistical and legal resource informational guides including talking points and fast facts from subject matter experts. It is critically important that the court establish a mandatory document multi-level review process to ensure no document is posted to the website containing un-redacted protected information. Triple checking all documents prior to posting is highly recommended. The goal is to proactively disseminate information to eliminate the need for court personnel to address individually. The goal is to divert as much traffic as possible away from the clerk’s office, staff, and court administration. Case specific websites should not be considered to be the official case archive, but rather a public access portal for case documents.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Utilizing social media tools also is highly recommended. It is important to establish multiple communications channels with the media through tools such as e-mail distributions and Twitter in combination with high profile case webpages. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Assign individual responsible for monitoring cyberspace and social media as requested by presiding judge: If possible, follow all media using Twitter to monitor case information and encourage them to follow you (the Court) to receive breaking news and information. |  |  |  |  |  |
| If documents related to the case will be posted on the court’s website, establish a posting procedure that will ensure documents are promptly available a minimum of 15 minutes prior to their availability in the clerk’s office to divert traffic from the clerk’s counter. Some courts that create high profile press pages emphatically state that all documents will be available only electronically via the webpage and that the media is not to contact the clerk’s office. Work with clerk’s office staff to assure appropriate documented internal operating procedures exist to provide for review of documents prior to their being posted, so that concerns such as court document is published on the internet, you cannot recall it. |  |  |  |  |  |
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| **Trial** |
| Proper juror management is key to a successful trial. (incorporate pieces from NCSC juror page?) |   |   |   |   |   |
| Apply the lessons learned from the pretrial events and follow the routine already established.  |   |   |   |   |   |
| It is critical to stay in regular contact with court security.  |   |   |   |   |   |
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| **Climactic- Word of the verdict coming in**  |
| Notify law enforcement a verdict has been reached and allow time to get into place.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ensure adequate security is in place inside and out of the courthouse.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Clearly communicate to the media how, when and where the verdict will be delivered to those outside the courtroom.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Judge outlines expectations for courtroom occupants during delivery of the verdict. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Coordinate post-verdict press release with jurors, if applicable. |  |  |  |  |  |
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| **Deconstruction – Winding down and restoring the court to its previous routine** |
| Winding down, restoring staff and the court to its previous routine can be emotional - don't underestimate the importance of having a support system in place especially for highly emotional or violent cases. |   |   |   |   |   |
| Facilitate the media breaking down all equipment and restoring all areas to pre-trial condition. |   |   |   |   |   |
| It will be important for the Leadership Team, in collaboration with information technology, to have a discussion regarding the longevity of the case specific website after the resolution of the case.  |  |  |  |  |  |