



Chief District Court Judge's Chambers
Te Whare o Ngā Kaihautū Waka o Te Kōti-ā-rohe o Aotearoa

Updated – August 2026

INTRODUCTION

This resource is a plain English quick reference guide to clarify some of the most common issues that regularly cause confusion between the Family Court and media representatives. The contents are drawn from correspondence received by the Chief District Court Judge's Chambers, the existing media guidelines and the Guide for Media Reporting in the Family Court. It aims to help build a shared understanding and positive working relationship between the judiciary, court staff and the media. It applies specifically to the Family Court.

RIGHT TO BE IN COURT

Media are defined as those being in court to report on proceedings and being subject to a code of ethics and an official complaints body. Individuals do not have to be on the Ministry's 'accredited media' list which is used to distribute media information electronically. They do have to be defined as media under legislation and as explained in the Ministry Media Guide.

Media are usually permitted to attend Family Court proceedings.

Media do not have to apply to attend court but they should always advise court staff of their intentions prior to the proceeding to allow time for the judge to invite views on media presence from parties.

Media intending to film/record proceedings are required to fill out and submit the standard form which can then be considered by the Judge.

Judges can ask media to leave a hearing at any time.

REPORTING OF PROCEEDINGS

Media can usually report on proceedings but can never publish details that identify persons under the age of 18, a vulnerable person, parents, others involved in the case or witnesses.

Media should note that often there is more than one piece of legislation involved in a case and that they may carry different reporting restrictions.

It is the media's responsibility to ensure coverage of court observes any statutory prohibitions, suppressions, or conditions.

Court staff can assist with understanding any restrictions but media are encouraged to seek their own independent legal advice.

Judges may choose to remind media in court of the help available.



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ACCESS TO COURT INFORMATION

Media can request access to files or documents but there is no general right of access so permission needs to be requested in writing.

Requests should explain why the applicant has a genuine and proper interest in the matter.

A judge, Family Court Associate or registrar will then consider requests and make a decision on release under R429 Family Court Rules 2002.

ISSUES/ADVICE COMPLAINTS

Questions around requests, coverage or behaviour can be raised through counsel, the Principal Family Court Judge or directly with the Principal Advisor at the Chief District Court Judges Chambers (who is also the secretariat for the District Court Media Committee). This applies to media and judges.

KEY CONTACTS

- Te Whare Principal Advisor Media – steve.corbett@justice.govt.nz

KEY SOURCES

- Guide for Media Reporting in the Family Court – District Courts website
- In-Court Media Coverage Guidelines 2016 (currently under review) – Courts of NZ website
- Ministry of Justice Media guide – Ministry of Justice website
- District Court (Access to Court Documents) Rules – NZ Legislation website