



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 District Court and media representatives. The contents are drawn from correspondence received by the Chief District Court Judge's Chambers and the existing media guidelines and protocols. It aims to help build a shared understanding and positive working relationship between the District Court judiciary, court staff and the media.

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 Media Guide.

Media are legally entitled and permitted to attend court proceedings, including in-chambers discussions and closed sessions (reporting restrictions may apply). The only exceptions are in some circumstances before the Family Court or where there are implications for national security.

Media do not have to apply to attend court unless they intend to film/record proceedings in which case they do have to fill out and submit a form.

It is good practice for media to identify themselves to court staff especially in Youth and Family Court proceedings, remote hearings, where they may not be a familiar face and when they are sitting in the public gallery. Equally it is good practice for judges to acknowledge/welcome their presence.

PRESENCE IN COURT

Media should have a separate and identified seating area in court, especially where there may be heightened tensions.

Media representatives (including camera operators) present in court are expected to dress accordingly (minimum smart casual).

If they don't interfere with the running of the court electronic devices can be used by media but are subject to time delay restrictions on publishing.



TE AO MĀRAMA

Enhancing Justice for All

Media wishing to film/record proceedings need to apply for and be granted permission. These may be subject to statutory restrictions and any conditions imposed by a judge. It is good practice for judges to supply an explanation for any denied applications.

Filming/recording rights are limited to the courtroom only. Permission does not include other areas of the court building, but media do have common law rights to film/record in public places.

REPORTING OF PROCEEDINGS

It is the responsibility of the media to ensure coverage of court observes any statutory prohibitions, suppressions or conditions. Registry staff and online guides are available to help explain the terms of coverage in each jurisdiction.

Permission is required prior to reporting any proceedings in the Youth Court.

REMOTE HEARINGS

Media attending a scheduled remote hearing have the same rights as if they were in court and they are not required to apply to attend unless they want to film/record.

Media can ask the court registry for a link to the hearing.

ACCESS TO COURT INFORMATION

In general media have access to all court information where legislation allows. Judges make decisions where legislation does not allow, following applications made by media.

Media in court (and those applying to the registry) should usually be given agreed copies of Summary of Facts, Minutes, Suppression Orders, Judgments and Sentencing Notes unless a judge decides there are grounds for them to be withheld. It is good practice to supply a reasoning for any denied applications.

Daily lists should be proactively emailed by registries to court reporters by 9am each day.

Media can be sent press sheets by email or supplied them in hard copy in the court.

ISSUES/ADVICE COMPLAINTS

Questions around requests, coverage or behaviour can be raised through counsel, the relevant Head of Bench, the National Executive 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

- National Executive Judge – JudgeJames.Johnston@justice.govt.nz
- Te Whare Principal Advisor Media – steve.corbett@justice.govt.nz

KEY SOURCES

- In-Court Media Coverage Guidelines 2016
- Ministry of Justice Media guide – Ministry of Justice website
- District Court (Access to Court Documents) Rules – NZ Legislation website