



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

Magisterial District Court Facility, Equipment & Security Guidelines

March 2021/version 2.1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	BACKGROUND	1
II.	PURPOSE AND SCOPE	1
III.	SECURITY.....	2
IV.	MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT COURT LOCATION	3
V.	SIGNAGE	4
VI.	EXTERIOR REQUIREMENTS.....	5
	A. ENTRANCES & EXITS	5
	B. PARKING	6
VII.	INTERIOR REQUIREMENTS	6
	A. LIGHTING	6
	B. PUBLIC AREAS.....	6
	C. PRIVATE AREAS.....	17
	D. SERVICE AREAS	21
	E. SECURED HOLDING AREA	21
VIII.	LEGAL RESEARCH	23
IX.	BUILDING CODES AND ACCESSIBILITY.....	23
X.	DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL	23
APPENDICES		
A1	SELECTED CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS, STATUTES, COURT RULES AND REPORTS CONCERNING COURT FACILITIES	
A2	AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT – SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS	
A3	EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS	
A4	HIGH PROFILE/HIGH RISK CASES	

I. BACKGROUND

In 2001, the Special Courts Administration Subcommittee of the Intergovernmental Task Force to Study the District Justice System provided ten recommendations to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania (“Court”) to improve magisterial district court operations. Recommendation 4 from the Subcommittee suggested the Court adopt minimum standards for magisterial district court facilities and equipment (see [Appendix A1](#)). In 2006, the Court approved the Magisterial District Court Facility, Equipment & Security Guidelines (“Guidelines”) as drafted by the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (“AOPC”) Judicial Programs Department. In July 2014, the AOPC created a workgroup¹ to review and update those Guidelines (April 2016, version 2.0). In 2020, based upon the recommendations of the Magisterial District Court Security Task Group,² AOPC revised the Guidelines to reflect best practices and safer procedures as they relate to both physical security and health safety enhancements (March 2021, version 2.1). Note: the **bolded** guidelines should be considered security priorities.

II. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The magisterial district court is the first, and often only, contact most citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania have with the court system. The image of the court, as shaped by the physical aesthetics of the court and the level of professionalism offered by the magisterial district judge and staff, will set the tone for activities and events that occur in the court and will ultimately influence the user's perception of Pennsylvania's court system. These Guidelines provide a set of standards to enhance the provision of judicial services and efficient administration of justice to the public.

¹ The Honorable John R. Bailey, Chester County; Aileen Bowers, Beaver County; The Honorable Lori R. Hackenberg, Union County; The Honorable Ronald J. Haskell, York County; The Honorable Margaret Hunsicker-Fleischer, Montgomery County; The Honorable Todd Kelly, Blair County; The Honorable Wendy Mellott, Franklin County; Robert Pollock, Bucks County; The Honorable Carmine Prestia, Centre County; The Honorable James Reiley, Schuylkill County; The Honorable Sandra Stevanus, Somerset County; and AOPC Staff: Amy Kehner, Judicial District Operations and Programs; Kyle Ramberger, Judicial Security; Andy Simpson, Judicial District Operations and Programs; and Mary Vilter, Office of the Assistant Court Administrator.

² The Honorable John H. Fishel, Magisterial District Judge, York County served as the Task Force Chair. Task Force members include: The Honorable Edward D. Reibman, President Judge, Lehigh County; The Honorable Russell D. Shurtleff, President Judge, Wyoming/Sullivan Counties; The Honorable Ronald J. Haggerty, Jr., Magisterial District Judge, Fayette County; The Honorable Beth S. Mills, Magisterial District Judge, Allegheny County; The Honorable Bill C. Wenner, Magisterial District Judge, Dauphin County; Tammy Jo Lambie, District Court Administrator, Somerset County; Patricia Norwood-Foden, District Court Administrator, Chester County; Kathy Sauter, Magisterial District Judge Special Courts Administrator, Monroe County; Todd Graybill, County Commissioner, Juniata County; Brinda Penyak, Deputy Director, County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania; Trooper Christopher Shoap, Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Team, Pennsylvania State Police; and AOPC Staff: Robert Granzow and Kyle Ramberger, Judicial District Security; Rick Pierce, Judicial District Operations; Damian Wachter, Esq., Legislative Affairs; and Stephen Baldwin, Jr., Office of the Court Administrator of Pennsylvania.

Based on a statewide review of magisterial district court facilities and national best practices, the following Guidelines provide specific minimum recommendations for district court facilities, equipment and security. The Guidelines serve as a model for all magisterial district court facilities and should be part of any decision-making process that involves magisterial district court facilities (e.g., lease negotiations, building purchase or construction, facility alterations, remodeling, renovating or expanding existing space). Fiscal health, availability of space, lease agreements, building ownership, the court's relationship with key county stakeholders and divergent priorities all affect the extent to which these Guidelines apply in each magisterial district. The AOPC will review the Guidelines periodically and revise as appropriate to incorporate best practices and changes to the court's business.

For additional information on these Guidelines or for assistance, please contact:

Facility/Equipment	Security
Judicial District Operations	Kyle Ramberger Assistant Director of Judicial District Security
Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts Supreme Court of Pennsylvania 601 Commonwealth Avenue, Suite 1500 P.O. Box 61260 Harrisburg, PA 17106-1260	
717.231.3313 Judicial.DistrictOperationsDept@pacourts.us	717.231.9589 Kyle.Ramberger@pacourts.us

III. SECURITY

Magisterial district judges, court staff and members of the public must feel safe if they are to conduct business in a respectful and fair manner. The district court facility should promote a secure environment without seeming to do so “whereas, open access to secure, safe courts promotes a sense of confidence in the stability of civil government” (Resolution 17, In Support of the Importance of Court Security, Conference of Chief Justice and Conference of State Court Administrators and Emergency Preparedness Committee, 57th Annual meeting, August 3, 2005). This balance is required to provide safety in the people's court for all parties. Too many security measures could impede essential court operations; while lax security can entice disgruntled users to be disrespectful and can compromise safety.

In 2006, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania's Judicial Council Committee on Judicial Safety and Preparedness developed a *Court Safety & Security Manual* to provide guidance to courts on the development of policies and procedures for creating and maintaining a safe court. The Guidelines incorporate the key concepts from the *Court Safety & Security Manual*. In addition, in late 2009,

the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania adopted Rules of Judicial Administration 1950-1954 to address continuity of operations, emergency situations (emergency regional units) and judicial security (see [Appendix AI](#)).

IV. MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT COURT LOCATION

1. The magisterial district court should be located in a place convenient to the public and which will allow the business of the office to be conducted with dignity, decorum and dispatch.
2. The area surrounding the district court should not put the public and court staff at an increased risk for harm. Crime statistics and coordination with local law enforcement should be a component of locating a new facility.
3. The magisterial district court should not be located in or appurtenant to the residence or place of business of the magisterial district judge (see [Appendix AI, Rules and Standards with Respect to Offices of Magisterial District Judges, Rule 101, Establishment of Offices. Minimum Office Standards](#)).
4. A magisterial district court should be housed in a location that upholds the impartiality and objectivity of the judicial system (i.e., not co-located within a police station or correctional facility). In circumstances where it is not possible to avoid shared quarters, the magisterial district court should maintain a clearly marked separate entrance.
5. Where a magisterial district court is located in a shared facility, the district court should be located in such a place, preferably on the ground floor and close to the main public entrance, where after hours proceedings can be accommodated without compromising the security of the rest of the building.
6. The magisterial district court and the residence of the magisterial district judge shall be within the boundaries of the magisterial district of the district court ([42 Pa.C.S. §3101](#)). Effective September 4, 2014, the office of a magisterial district judge may be located outside the boundaries upon petition of the president judge of the judicial district provided certain criteria is met (see [Appendix AI, Rules and Standards with Respect to Offices of Magisterial District Judges, Rule 101, Establishment of Offices. Minimum Office Standards](#)).
7. When possible, a magisterial district court should be located in a place that is convenient to emergency services such as police, fire, and emergency medical services.
8. There may be circumstances where a president judge should consider submitting a petition to the Supreme Court to co-locate magisterial district courts in a single location to reduce costs and provide greater security so long as it does not cause inconvenience

or confusion to the public or impede the accessibility of the courts (see [Appendix A1, Rules and Standards with Respect to Offices of Magisterial District Judges, Rule 101\(B\)-\(C\), Establishment of Offices. Minimum Office Standards](#)).

V. SIGNAGE

1. Prominent directional and informational signs should be used throughout the magisterial district court. These signs should complement the interior and exterior décor and be uniform and professional in appearance. Good signs answer questions before they are asked, saving staff time, and promoting good will with the public.
2. All signage should be clear and provide pertinent information. Exterior signage should be weatherproof and should include the following information: office name, magisterial district court number, hours of operation, and parking information. Interior signage should include public notices, room names (e.g. Conference Room 1), counter signs, restricted access, warnings, directional signs with arrows, facilities for disabled persons, quiet zones and brief procedural guidelines. Appropriate signage conspicuously displayed must address security issues such as persons entering the facility are subject to search, CCTV is utilized; and dangerous weapons of any type are prohibited in a court facility. The signage for weapons should cite [18 Pa. Code § 913](#) (see [Appendix A1](#)). Where practical, signs should be multi-lingual to make court services more accessible to users with limited English proficiency. Braille or other accommodations should be provided to vision impaired users to ensure effective communication.
3. Areas where the public is not permitted should be clearly marked as no admittance areas.
4. Hand lettered signs should be avoided except as a temporary measure.
5. All signage, letterhead, etc. should display the correct information. The magisterial district judge's name and court number should be accurate. Outdated terminology such as references to a magistrate, district justice and justice of the peace should not be used in any signage, communications or correspondence.
6. An approved symbol identifying the Commonwealth should be prominently displayed on the exterior of the district court.
7. Each magisterial district court must display the [Your Right to an Interpreter](#) poster provided by the AOPC. This resource is to help staff identify and assist persons with limited English proficiency. A poster should be visibly displayed in a primary customer service location (e.g., the transaction counter).
8. Where there is more than one entrance to a magisterial district court facility,

appropriate signage should be provided, directing court users with disabilities to the accessible entrance.

VI. EXTERIOR REQUIREMENTS

A. ENTRANCES & EXITS

1. Easy pedestrian access should be provided to the main entrance.
2. All entrances and exits should be adequately and properly illuminated.
3. All entrance and exit doors should have shatterproof glass or intrusion resistant window film.
4. Judges and court staff should have their own single point of entry, separate from the public's entrance.
5. A separate judicial emergency exit should be included in the staff area, if architecturally feasible.
6. Bollards or other functional barriers should, where feasible, be incorporated into the landscaping/front area of the district court.
7. Building exterior details and landscaping should be designed to minimize hidden or blind areas that could impede security, and exterior CCTV should be installed to monitor activity outside the court facility.
8. An electronic intrusion detection system should be installed at each magisterial district court. The system should be equipped with intrusion alarms, Passive Infrared Detection (PIR), glass break detection and door sensors.
9. The United States flag and the Commonwealth flag should be displayed outside the facility, if possible.
10. All public and non-public doors should be equipped with an audible alarm.
11. Emergency exits and doors not in use should remain inaccessible from the outside.
12. Persons with disabilities should have full accessibility to the court. A ramp should be integrated at the entrance, where necessary, and public entrance doors should be the appropriate width and able to open easily.
13. Weatherproof trash and cigarette receptacles should be placed outside the public entrance to the facility.
14. Routine patrols around the magisterial district court should be conducted by law enforcement during and after office hours.

B. PARKING

1. Adequate public parking should be provided within easy walking distance of the district court. If possible, parking should be free and in close proximity to the court.
2. The parking lot should be adequately and properly illuminated. The parking lot should have Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras. Lighting should be set so it does not interfere with image capturing on the CCTV.
3. Parking for persons with disabilities should be appropriately marked, and should be close to the entrance of the district court.
4. Parking areas should have ramped walkways, where necessary, to ensure full accessibility to all court users.
5. If possible, parking on streets directly adjacent to the building should be forbidden.
6. Staff and judge parking should be marked “Reserved” and avoid reference to name or title.

VII. INTERIOR REQUIREMENTS

A dignified atmosphere has a positive influence on behavior and helps to enhance respect and maintain control, security and decorum. The guidelines regarding signage in Section V, Exterior Requirements, are applicable to all interior areas of the court facility.

Efficiency and security are enhanced through the clear separation of circulation routes throughout the facility. There should be public zones for court users, secured zones for in-custody defendants, and private zones for judges and court personnel. In addition, doors leading to secured and private zones should be made out of solid core wood or steel with associated security hardware fixtures. Consideration should also be given to the installation of peepholes to allow for surveillance by staff as appropriate.

A. LIGHTING

1. All work and waiting areas should, whenever possible, have natural lighting.
2. The quality of light should be sufficient to perform tasks required in each space without excess light that would be inefficient and unpleasant.

B. PUBLIC AREAS

1. Waiting Area
 - a. Gun or property lockers, as required by law, should be provided at each district court facility. These lockers should be used to store handguns and other personal

items not permitted into the court facility. A sign should be posted outlining the policy and applicable penalties. The lockers and signage must be consistent with the Pennsylvania Crimes Code ([18 Pa.C.S. §913](#)) (see [Appendix AI](#)).

- b. **There should be a sufficient number of functioning CCTV cameras to cover all public areas (e.g., waiting areas, lobbies, public transaction counters).**
- c. The décor of the waiting area should be consistent with the décor and tone of the district courtroom and all Commonwealth courts: professional, neutral and clean.
- d. **The size of the waiting area should be proportionate to the population served.**
- e. The waiting area must facilitate the separation of parties (for example, victims from perpetrators, family members or parties to a dispute).
- f. Public areas should be easily accessible from the public entrances and should be planned so they are near the entrance to the courtroom, where visitors may wait and attorneys can meet with their clients.
- g. Comfortable seating areas should be provided, but should not obstruct traffic patterns. Furniture and finishes should be comfortable, sturdy, durable, vandal-resistant and easy to clean. Seating should be provided that cannot be used as a weapon of opportunity (rows of chairs or benches; furniture bolted to the floor).
- h. A bulletin board should be provided for the posting of public information.
- i. The area should be furnished with a writing table or wall-mounted counter for the public to complete any necessary forms.
- j. Hallways can be used as public waiting areas if they are of sufficient width and if a vestibule that provides a sufficient sound lock is installed at the entrance of the courtroom.
- k. A suggestion/comment box should be provided in each waiting area. Comments from court users should be routinely reviewed by magisterial district court staff and submitted to the district court administrator or his/her designee. Comments can help mitigate potential problems and help courts provide better customer service.
- l. **Public areas should be routinely searched before and after court proceedings, and periodically throughout the day for weapons and other contraband. The detection of weapons, other contraband, or anything suspicious should be immediately reported to law enforcement.**

2. Transaction Counter

- a. **The transaction counter should be constructed to foster efficient transactions and communication in a secure manner.**
- b. The counter should be clearly visible from the staff work area so that staff can see when someone is waiting. Staff workspaces should face the counter.
- c. An adequate public queuing area leading to the counter should be provided.
- d. The number of transaction windows/workstations should be determined by estimating the most requested docket types and the length of time required to process each request, so that the public is not waiting for an unreasonable length of time.
- e. High demand courts can use a number system to prioritize visitors and reduce standing time.
- f. The counter should be designed so that the staff and customer are at approximately the same eye level.
- g. The transaction counter should be fully accessible to all court users. Counter height should be staggered to accommodate persons with disabilities or a lapboard can be provided.
- h. **Transaction glass (bullet resistant, shatterproof, security glazing, or Plexiglass with intrusion resistant window film) should be installed between the transaction counter and the ceiling to reduce noise in the office and provide greater security.**
- i. A speaking hole or microphone should be included. Transaction windows can hinder communication if there isn't a mechanism to transmit sound.
- j. When seeking out new office space, or retrofitting old space, the judicial districts should consider how to facilitate telephonic interpreting, particularly at the counter with the constraints of security glass. For example, districts may consider purchasing a flexible headset that can be plugged into the back of court staff's telephone, then passed by court staff through the security glass to the customer service side of the counter. In this fashion, a 3-way call can be placed by court staff to a telephone interpreting vendor, an interpreter requested in the language spoken by a limited English proficient ("LEP") court user, and court business can be transacted between the LEP court user and court staff.

- k. **Under each transaction counter, a convenient, silent duress alarm that will directly alert law enforcement in the event of an emergency should be installed. Care should be taken to avoid placement of the alarm where it could easily be accidentally activated. The alarm should be within easy reach of staff members at the transaction counter and activation should be as inconspicuous as possible. Duress alarms should be tested on a regular basis (monthly); and if practicable, the duress alarms should be integrated with the county 911 center.**
 - l. Active files and records should be within easy access from the counter workstation, but should not be accessible to the public.
 - m. Pens should be provided to the public for completion of paperwork. Notification should be posted regarding payment methods and policies (identification required for personal check writing, returned check fees, etc.).
 - n. **Measures must be taken to secure monetary transactions. All monetary transactions, for example, accepting fine and fee payments and preparing deposits, should be conducted in an enclosed and protected setting. If the bank courier is a magisterial court staffer, verification of the staff member's safety should be established when the staff member departs the office, arrives at the bank, and departs the bank. If possible, avoid routines when handling deposits; vary persons, the time of day and days of the week that these tasks are performed. Consideration should be given to coordinating with law enforcement for an escort.**
 - o. A secured drop box, only accessible by authorized staff may be provided for after-hours payment. Safety and security should be considered in design and use. Signage should indicate that cash should not be permitted in the drop box and reference the website where credit/debit payments can be made.
3. Courtroom
- a. In general, a courtroom that accommodates twenty people should be approximately eight hundred (800) square feet. To accommodate ten to twelve people, allow approximately two hundred (200) square feet. The courtroom should be dignified, comfortable, and businesslike. Courtrooms should be of a width that is appropriate to ensure: adequate circulation within the litigation area, the proper separation of litigants and attorneys, the safe movement of prisoners, and space to accommodate persons with disabilities.
 - b. Symbolism and functionality are important in courtroom design. The color and tone of walls and ceilings should promote a dignified, calm atmosphere.

- c. Furniture and finishes should be comfortable, sturdy, durable, vandal-resistant and easy to clean. Consider both the life-cycle cost of materials and aesthetics.
- d. A clock should be securely attached to the back wall of the courtroom.
- e. An approved state symbol (e.g., the Coat of Arms of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania) should be securely attached to the wall behind, or integrated into the bench.
- f. Adequate lighting should be provided so all occupants can see the proceedings.
- g. **Windows should be equipped with draperies or window shades. While natural lighting is often desirable for psychological reasons, courtrooms containing exterior windows can suffer from sunlight shadowing, heating and cooling complications, exterior noise and visual distractions. Draperies and window shades also increase security by concealing vision from the outside.**
- h. Space should be provided to display flags for both the United States and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Flagpoles should be located behind the bench, secured to the floor or wall and free of sharp points or parts that can be used as a weapon.
- i. Every effort should be made to minimize loose items (staplers, scissors, letter openers, name plates, microphones, electrical cords and decorative items) in the courtroom that could become potential weapons of opportunity in the event of a disturbance. Replace pens and pencils at counsel tables with a golf pencil or a high security pen that is plastic, flexible construction, uses water-based ink and does not contain metal.
- j. **Public access to the courtroom should be through one entryway. The door should have a glass panel to permit viewing of the proceedings. All entrances to the courtroom should be locked when not in use.**
- k. **Entrances to the courtroom should be located near the appropriate areas for each courtroom participant. The public should enter through a single public vestibule to provide sight and sound separation from the public corridor. Prisoners should enter directly from the holding area through a passageway located near the defendant's attorney table. If this is not possible, a written procedure should be established and routinely followed to keep prisoners from co-mingling with victims, witnesses and the public. The magisterial district judge should enter near the bench.**

- l. **Sufficient space should be provided between the bench and attorney tables to provide adequate circulation and to give prominence to the magisterial district judge and his or her role in the proceeding.**
- m. **When entering the courtroom, in-custody individuals and defendants should be restrained (unless prohibited by state or federal law) and should not be escorted near the public or witnesses.**
- n. A whiteboard should be provided in the courtroom for charting, drawing, and for holding paper exhibits.
- o. Appropriate technology (e.g., a laptop, projection screen and monitor) should be made available to display or play evidentiary exhibits.
- p. **Video conferencing equipment should be utilized for conducting video arraignments, conducting interviews between prisoners and attorneys, for staff-to-staff communications and other proceedings consistent with statutes and rules. The use of video conferencing enhances security by reducing the risk of defendant escape or assault on transport officers, judges and anyone in the courtroom. It also improves court efficiency and reduces travel cost associated with defendant transport. Video conferencing units should be routinely tested to minimize the risk of technical errors that may reduce the quality of the video conference.**
- q. All participants require clear lines of sight and the ability to hear and clearly see all other participants. Distance can affect acoustics and the ability to observe changes in facial expression or demeanor. Distances between speakers should be short, and sightlines should allow primary participants to observe the proceedings within a 60-degree cone of vision.
- r. Acoustics should be clear, with no reverberations or echoes. Features such as soundproofing between the courtroom and public area/staff area and other surrounding spaces (such as a holding cell), double door vestibules from public corridors and carpeting all help reduce extraneous noise within the courtroom.
- s. To insulate the courtroom from noise, vestibules and conference rooms should be placed between the courtroom and public corridor as a buffer zone.
- t. Assistive Listening Systems: Assistive listening systems that comply with the ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (ADAAG) should be available in the courtroom for cases including deaf and hard of hearing participants. The minimum number of receivers should be four percent of the room occupant load,

as determined by applicable state or local codes, but not less than two receivers. An informational sign indicating the availability of an assistive listening system and compliance with the applicable sections of the ADAAG should be posted in a prominent place. Counties may have a system available for use in the courts within the county in lieu of installing a system in every courtroom.

- u. A courtroom that is too warm or too cool can have adverse effects upon the participants. Courtrooms should have adequate ventilation, heating, and cooling systems, with an independent thermostat and easy to adjust controls.

4. Magisterial District Judge's Bench

- a. The magisterial district judge is the symbol of the administration of justice and his or her bench needs to reflect the dignity and authority of the judiciary. The magisterial district judge must be able to view and hear all courtroom participants, address all persons in the courtroom, and pass and receive documents from attorneys.
- b. **The magisterial district judge's bench should be elevated.**
- c. **The bench should provide a commanding view of all areas and entrances of the courtroom. The bench should face the spectators. It may be placed on the front wall, either centered or off-center, or in the corner of the courtroom.**
- d. The size of the bench should be proportionate to the size of the courtroom. It should also be sized to accommodate future installation of ramps or lifts for persons with disabilities. This requires unobstructed space within the bench, a fully accessible path to the bench, and a fully accessible desk. The route to the bench within the courtroom should occur at the same level as the bench; any transition to this raised level (steps, ramp or lift) should occur outside the courtroom and out of view of the public and court participants, if feasible.
- e. The bench should be well lit with no glare or harsh lights.
- f. Drawers should be provided for forms, supplies, and personal items, as well as adequate shelving for reference books.
- g. A name plate should be affixed to the front of the bench.
- h. The bench should include a comfortable, easily moved executive armchair with adjustable height and swivel capabilities.
- i. A telephone should be installed for emergency communications and for holding telephone conferences.

- j. **The bench should have a concealed, convenient, silent duress alarm that will directly alert law enforcement in the event of an emergency. While care should be taken to avoid placement of the alarm where it could easily be accidentally activated, the alarm should be within easy reach of the magisterial district judge, and its activation should be as inconspicuous as possible. Duress alarms should be tested on a regular basis (monthly), and if practicable, the duress alarms should be integrated with the county 911 center.**
 - k. **Bullet-absorptive materials should be incorporated into the design of the magisterial district judge's bench to enhance the safety of the magisterial district judge.**
 - l. In larger courtrooms, the bench should be equipped with a mounted or secured microphone connected to an amplifier that can be adjusted by the magisterial district judge.
5. Witness Stand
- a. The witness, along with the magisterial district judge, should be the focal point of all courtroom proceedings. It is critical that all courtroom participants clearly hear and see all verbal and nonverbal communication from the witness.
 - b. The appearance of the witness stand should be compatible with the style and finish of the magisterial district judge's bench and other courtroom furniture.
 - c. A desk area or shelf area should be provided for examination of exhibits.
 - d. The area around the witness stand should be well lit, but the light source should not be so direct as to cast shadows or glare.
 - e. The witness stand should be affixed to the floor to ensure control of prisoners who must testify. To protect the magisterial district judge from actions of a hostile witness, some physical separation should exist between the witness stand and the magisterial district judge's bench.
 - f. In larger courtrooms, a microphone should be mounted unobtrusively at the witness stand and be able to receive clearly the testimony of soft-spoken witnesses.
 - g. The witness stand in all courtrooms is a public area and must be fully accessible to persons with a disability. It is recommended that in order to avoid the necessity of providing a ramp, the witness stand be placed at floor level.

- h. Earphones or other assistive listening devices should be available for hard of hearing participants.
6. Attorney Tables
- a. Two attorney tables should be provided.
 - b. Each table should accommodate two to four persons, including the litigants.
 - c. The workspace should be sufficient to handle an attorney's materials and documents.
 - d. The tables should not have drawers or concealed recesses where a weapon, bomb or other contraband may be placed.
 - e. Tables should be secured or anchored to the floor or be of sufficient weight that they cannot be picked up easily and used as a weapon.
 - f. The appearance of the attorney tables should be compatible with the style and finish of the magisterial district judge's bench and other courtroom furniture.
 - g. To prevent private conversations from being overheard or documents from being read, there should be a minimum of three feet separation between the attorney tables.
 - h. Generally, a distance of approximately six to eight feet should be maintained from the front of the bench to the front of the attorney tables.
 - i. Attorney tables should be approximately three to four feet from the nearest spectator.
 - j. The attorney tables should be fully accessible to persons with disabilities with adequate access to the work area and maneuvering room behind the tables to accommodate any assistive devices.
 - k. Portable duress alarms should be made available to attorneys for use during a hearing or in conference with a litigant or witness.
7. Spectator Seating
- a. The size of the spectator seating area should be determined by an analysis of the types of caseload and average number of spectators who appear for each case. If numerous hearings are held at the same time, space should be provided to accommodate multiple unrelated parties.
 - b. Seating may be either bench-type or theater-style. Bench seating is preferable because it can accommodate more people within the same area. It is also

comparatively easy to maintain, shows wear less quickly, and offers a dignified appearance. Movable or stacking chairs should be avoided. These types of chairs can easily become weapons of opportunity.

- c. The floor should be carpeted and the surrounding walls should be acoustically treated.
 - d. Public seating should remain at floor level to permit easy access by disabled persons.
 - e. For reasons of security, a single public entrance to the spectator seating is preferred for public access.
 - f. Earphones or other assistive listening devices should be available for hearing impaired participants.
8. Conference Rooms
- a. Each court should have at least two small conference rooms that can be used by attorneys to confer with their clients in private. It can also be used to separate victims from perpetrators, or to hold in-custody defendants when a secured holding area is unavailable.
 - b. The attorney/client conference rooms should be located off the main waiting area, and as close as possible to the courtroom.
 - c. **The rooms should be equipped with a desk/table and a minimum of two chairs. Furniture should be secured or anchored to avoid becoming a weapon of opportunity. The room should be equipped with a prisoner anchoring device, voice and data jacks, electrical outlets and a telephone (to be provided on request).**
 - d. The room should be soundproofed to maintain the privacy of the conversations, particularly if it is located adjacent to a courtroom or public corridor.
 - e. A viewing panel in the door should be provided so that potential users can see if the room is occupied.
 - f. **Conference rooms should be routinely searched before and after court, and periodically throughout the day for weapons and other contraband. The detection of weapons, other contraband, or anything suspicious should be immediately reported to law enforcement.**

9. Public Restroom Facilities

- a. Users of the magisterial district court should have restroom facilities that are clean and secure.
- b. Proper signs for restrooms should be provided to eliminate numerous inquiries.
- c. Restrooms should be located near public waiting areas.
- d. Male and female restrooms should be grouped together rather than located in different areas to make them easier to find.
- e. Code requirements should be adhered to for toilet facilities for people with disabilities.
- f. For security and noise considerations, restrooms should not directly adjoin the courtrooms.
- g. If it is not feasible to have separate restrooms for the public and in-custody defendants, a policy must be enacted to ensure that the public and the in-custody defendant are not in the restroom at the same time and that the restroom is checked for contraband between uses.
- h. **The ceiling should be made of a solid material to avoid potential escape or hiding of weapons or other contraband.**
- i. Minimal accessories should be provided (toilet paper rolls, mirror, hand towel dispenser, soap dispenser). Accessories that are provided should be securely affixed to the wall to avoid being used as weapons.
- j. The door to the facility should be made of a solid material.
- k. **In new construction, or replacing the toilet, a one-piece toilet should be considered to limit the opportunity of hiding weapons in the tank or using the toilet seat as a weapon.**
- l. Restrooms should be routinely searched before and after court for weapons and other contraband. The detection of weapons, other contraband, or anything suspicious should be immediately reported to law enforcement.

10. CCTV

- a. **Signage shall be prominently displayed to indicate that CCTV equipment is being used.**
- b. **All CCTV equipment should be connected to a recorder that can store video footage for no less than 30 days.**

- c. **CCTV equipment should have the ability to be monitored offsite by trained personnel, when feasible.**
- d. **CCTV cameras shall be used in accordance with Pa.R.J.A. No. 1910. Requests for video surveillance footage is subject to approval of the president judge.**

C. PRIVATE AREAS

1. Staff Office Area

- a. The staff office area should be consistent with the overall design and image of the district court.
- b. **Appropriate separation should be maintained between the public and staff by means of teller type windows or large counter surfaces. Transaction glass (bullet resistant, shatterproof, security glazing or Plexiglass with intrusion resistant window film), should be installed between the transaction counter and the ceiling to reduce noise in the office and provide greater security. The public should not be able to access the staff area at any time. The staff area should use a solid core door with an appropriate access control system such as card key access, magnetic door release or cipher lock with associated mounting hardware (for additional information, please see section regarding Transaction Counter).**
- c. Active case files should be stored close to the staff work areas or public counter.
- d. **Staff should have a duress alarm system for prompt notification of law enforcement in an emergency. Duress alarms should be tested on a regular basis (monthly), and if practicable, the duress alarms should be integrated with the county 911 center.**
- e. The office should be provided with modern telephone equipment with an adequate number of lines and extensions in order to carry out the necessary functions of the office.
- f. Record filing and storage areas should be centrally located and secure from unsupervised public access. File cabinets should have working locks to limit access of unauthorized personnel.
- g. A supply closet should be provided to store office supplies, including file folders and court forms.
- h. A small equipment and work area should be provided and should include, at a minimum:
 - 1. photocopier/scanner

2. facsimile machine
 3. typewriter
 4. paper shredder
 5. printer
 6. safe and/or locking cash box
 7. answering machine
 8. postage machine
- i. Staff restrooms separate from the magisterial district judge and public should be provided. The restroom should be fully accessible and able to accommodate persons with disabilities.
 - j. A first aid kit and fire extinguisher should be located in an easily accessible location.
 - k. A clock should be displayed on the wall.
 - l. A closet or coat rack should be provided for storage.
 - m. Workstations or desk configurations should be designed to accommodate one or more computer terminals and networked stations.
 1. The workstation or desk should provide for appropriate clearance for knee space.
 2. The modular workstation or desk configuration should include a computer and a file cabinet. Sufficient cabling and outlets must be provided for each station.
 3. The standard should include appropriate accessories to enable keyboards to pull in and out, outlets for electricity, modems and network links.
 4. As a general estimate, staff members should have a minimum of 50-80 square feet per workstation, with supervisors permitted 80-100 square feet.
 5. Telecommunications and computer jacks should permit flexibility of workstation placement while minimizing the use of extension cords.
 6. The desk component of the workstation should include, at a minimum, one locking drawer.
 - n. Staff should be provided or have access to a computer complete with access to the Magisterial District Judge System (MDJS), word processing, spreadsheet software and state and/or county provided email.
 - o. Where shared equipment is used (printers, copiers, etc.) consider the distance between each workstation to the equipment. Heat and noise generated by the

equipment can impact the workspace and the storage of supplies needed to maintain the equipment.

- p. All areas of the office should be accessible to persons with disabilities. Particular attention should be given to designing at least one counter position to accommodate a staff person or customer with a disability.

2. Staff Break Area

- a. A small break area should be provided for staff to use while on break and for lunch.
- b. Amenities should include a coffee maker, filtered water, microwave, refrigerator and sink.

3. Chambers

- a. **Judicial chambers should be located away from public areas and should provide the magisterial district judge with efficient and safe access to the courtroom.**
 - 1. **The entry from chambers to the courtroom should be via a door made from a solid substance (not hollow) that is locked when not in use.**
 - 2. **The public should not have direct access to the magisterial district judge's private office.**
- b. The magisterial district judge should have a telephone, computer and an individual printer or access to the office printer.
- c. The magisterial district judge should be provided with wireless communications equipment including wireless telephones to keep in contact with staff and on-call magisterial district judges.
- d. Chambers should be equipped with sufficient electrical outlets, conduits and cabling for telecommunication and data lines.
- e. The office should be furnished with a desk, work surface, bookcase, small conference table and side chairs. The furnishings should be appropriate to the decorum of the office and may include flags for the United States and the Commonwealth.
- f. Chambers should include a closet and private restroom.
- g. **Chambers should be equipped with a silent duress alarm, located inconspicuously at the desk. The duress alarms should be tested on a regular basis (monthly) and, if practicable, should be integrated into the county 911 center.**

- h. The office should be soundproof and relatively quiet.
 - i. Windows for natural lighting should be provided where practicable. Curtains or blinds should be installed and used to prevent an unobstructed view of the office from the outside.
 - j. On average, the magisterial district judge's chambers should be approximately 150 square feet.
 - k. Chambers should be fully accessible to persons with disabilities.
4. File Room
- a. Active and inactive files should be maintained in separate filing areas (although they can be physically located in the same filing room). The filing cabinets and/or filing room should be equipped with a working lock.
 - b. All active records should be housed in an area conveniently accessible by staff serving the counter as well as others in the office needing to work with the case files.
 - c. Records should not be stored in areas accessible to the public.
 - d. Off-site storage is recommended for archived records that need to be accessed infrequently. Files should be securely stored with access limited to authorized personnel. [The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, Record Retention and Disposition Schedule with Guidelines, dated January 2014](#), dictates minimum retention periods and destructions hold procedures (Sections: 2.4.1 *Matters in Litigation*; 2.4.2. *Matters Pending Audit*; and 5.2 *Magisterial District Courts, Pittsburgh Municipal Court, Philadelphia Municipal Court Records*) (see [Appendix A1](#)).
 - e. Wherever possible, use open shelf lateral storage units³, with a maximum of seven shelves. More than seven shelves make it difficult to file and retrieve files from the top shelf.
 - f. The storage area should be equipped with a sprinkler system in the event of fire.
 - g. The maximum recommended size of the filing area will depend on the number and size of case files and the type of storage units being used.

³ Open shelf files can store 30% more files (as measured in filing inches) than the commonly used five drawer vertical cabinet.

- h. Where practicable, a small table in the filing area is helpful for filing and research.
- i. Walls separating records storage areas from other functional spaces should be four-hour fire-resistant walls. All openings in firewalls should be protected on each side by fire doors. No water, steam, or other pipes, other than sprinkler pipes, should pass through the record storage area.
- j. The flooring should have a minimum live load capacity of 125 pounds per square foot, depending upon the height of the shelving.

D. SERVICE AREAS

- 1. Janitor's Closet
 - a. A janitor's closet should be provided for storing supplies and equipment. It should be equipped with a sink, storage shelves and a small work surface. **The closet should be locked when not in use.**
- 2. Telecommunications and Computer Closet
 - a. A separate room or closet should be dedicated to serve the office's telecommunications and computer needs. This area should have the main connections for all telecommunications equipment, video conferencing systems, telephone and computer servers. There should be strict control of access to this area via a tamper-resistant locking device.
 - b. The closet should be equipped with proper lighting for maintenance and access.
 - c. Equipment should be installed in a manner that provides sufficient access to the back of equipment panels where cabling is installed.
 - d. The closet should be equipped with proper fire extinguisher devices and smoke detectors.
 - e. All equipment should be protected from power surges and brown outs.

E. SECURED HOLDING AREA

- 1. The holding area must be inspected for and cleared of structural defects, missing structural components, weapons, contraband, or other items posing a potential threat to safety and security of the court before in-custody defendants are placed in the holding area. This area must also be inspected after in-custody defendants are removed.
- 2. In-custody defendants need to be separated from the public while maintaining their safety and constitutional rights.

3. **The secured area should have a separate entrance from the public where feasible. The small holding facility should be provided close to the hearing room. This area should have a secured bench or reinforced bar affixed to the floor or wall to secure the in-custody defendants. In the event a small holding facility is not available, a secured, anchored bar should be provided in an area away from the public and staff.**
4. **Separate holding areas for men and women should be provided. If these holding areas are to be co-located, there should be sight and sound separation between the sexes. Juveniles should be held in a separate space from adults and must adhere to all applicable procedures and rules regarding juveniles.**
5. A small viewing window on the holding cell door is required. It should be possible to view the interior of all cells.
6. Lighting fixtures and ventilation shafts should be secured in place to prevent their removal and use as weapons.
7. The cells should be equipped with vandal-resistant furniture.
8. Holding areas should be soundproofed. In-custody defendants may attempt to disrupt court proceedings by shouting insults, using abusive language, or banging on the walls. Such noise can disrupt proceedings. No sound from the holding area should be audible.
9. All areas should be accessible to persons with disabilities.
10. The secured area should have its own toilet facility. This eliminates staff and the public from sharing facilities and alleviates any concern about smuggling drugs and weapons to prisoners from a family member or friend.
11. Drains for sinks, toilets and wash drains should be large enough so that they cannot be easily blocked.
12. The toilet should be tankless to eliminate a hiding place for contraband.
13. **The holding cells and toilet facilities should have solid, reinforced ceilings. Removable drop ceilings should be avoided.**
14. Prisoners should be escorted to the courtroom without going through public or private corridors and work areas.
15. **When entering the courtroom, in-custody defendants should not be escorted or unshackled near the public.**

VIII. LEGAL RESEARCH

1. Each district court should maintain current applicable legal reference books and periodicals. Electronic access to these materials should be provided. The titles will vary with court size, budget and community needs.
2. The magisterial district judge should have access to research materials (either paper or electronic) to conduct legal research. Provisions should be made for power, cable and/or telephone jacks to provide internet access.

IX. BUILDING CODES AND ACCESSIBILITY

1. All facilities should be accessible to persons with disabilities and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (“ADAAG”).
2. The electrical, heating, ventilation and air conditioning system must meet all state, local and federal code requirements.
3. Fire detection systems, monitors, smoke detectors, sprinkler flow must meet all state, local and federal code requirements.
4. All magisterial district court facilities must meet all applicable federal, state and local codes.

X. DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

1. All facilities should be in compliance with the Centers for Disease Control’s and the Pennsylvania Department of Health’s guidelines for prevention and control of infectious diseases.
2. All facilities should consider having a limited supply of personal protective equipment, when needed, for the general public and court staff.

APPENDICES

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

[Article V, §12, Qualifications of Justices, Judges and Justices of the Peace](#)

§ 12. Qualifications of justices, judges and justices of the peace.

- (a) Justices, judges and justices of the peace shall be citizens of the Commonwealth. Justices and judges, except the judges of the traffic court in the City of Philadelphia, shall be members of the bar of the Supreme Court. Justices and judges of statewide courts, for a period of one year preceding their election or appointment and during their continuance in office, shall reside within the commonwealth. Other judges and justices of the peace, for a period of one year preceding their election or appointment and during their continuance in office, shall reside within their respective districts, except as provided in this article for temporary assignments.
- (b) Justices of the peace shall be members of the bar of the Supreme Court or shall complete a course of training and instruction in the duties of their respective offices and pass an examination prior to assuming office. Such courses and examinations shall be as provided by law.

(Apr. 26, 2016, 2015 P.L.607, J.R.2)

2016 Amendment. Joint Resolution No.2 of 2015 amended subsec. (b).

STATUTORY PROVISIONS

[18 Pa.C.S. §913 \(West Supp. 2001\) \(Possession of firearm or other dangerous weapon in court facility.\)](#)

§ 913. Possession of firearm or other dangerous weapon in court facility.

- (a) Offense defined.--A person commits an offense if he:
 - (1) Knowingly possesses a firearm or other dangerous weapon in a court facility or knowingly causes a firearm or other dangerous weapon to be present in a court facility; or
 - (2) Knowingly possesses a firearm or other dangerous weapon in a court facility with the intent that the firearm or other dangerous weapon be used in the commission of a crime or knowingly causes a firearm or other dangerous weapon to be present in a court facility with the intent that the firearm or other dangerous weapon be used in the commission of a crime.

(b) Grading.--

- (1) Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (3), an offense under subsection (a)(1) is a misdemeanor of the third degree.
- (2) An offense under subsection (a)(2) is a misdemeanor of the first degree.
- (3) An offense under subsection (a)(1) is a summary offense if the person was carrying a firearm under section 6106(b) (relating to firearms not to be carried without a license) or 6109 (relating to licenses) and failed to check the firearm under subsection (e) prior to entering the court facility.

(c) Exceptions.--Subsection (a) shall not apply to:

- (1) The lawful performance of official duties by an officer, agent or employee of the United States, the Commonwealth or a political subdivision who is authorized by law to engage in or supervise the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of any violation of law.
- (2) The lawful performance of official duties by a court official.
- (3) The carrying of rifles and shotguns by instructors and participants in a course of instruction provided by the Pennsylvania Game Commission under 34 Pa.C.S. § 2704 (relating to eligibility for license).
- (4) Associations of veteran soldiers and their auxiliaries or members of organized armed forces of the United States or the Commonwealth, including reserve components, when engaged in the performance of ceremonial duties with county approval.
- (5) The carrying of a dangerous weapon or firearm unloaded and in a secure wrapper by an attorney who seeks to employ the dangerous weapon or firearm as an exhibit or as a demonstration and who possesses written authorization from the court to bring the dangerous weapon or firearm into the court facility.

(d) Posting of notice.-- Notice of the provisions of subsections (a) and (e) shall be posted conspicuously at each public entrance to each courthouse or other building containing a court facility and each court facility, and no person shall be convicted of an offense under subsection (a)(1) with respect to a court facility if the notice was not so posted at each public entrance to the courthouse or other building containing a court facility and at the court facility unless the person had actual notice of the provisions of subsection (a).

(e) Facilities for checking firearms or other dangerous weapons.--Each county shall make available at or within the building containing a court facility by July 1, 2002, lockers or similar facilities at no charge or cost for the temporary checking of firearms by persons carrying firearms under section 6106(b) or 6109 or for the checking of other dangerous weapons that are not otherwise prohibited by law. Any individual checking a firearm,

dangerous weapon or an item deemed to be a dangerous weapon at a court facility must be issued a receipt. Notice of the location of the facility shall be posted as required under subsection (d).

(f) Definitions.--As used in this section, the following words and phrases shall have the meanings given to them in this subsection:

"Court facility." The courtroom of a court of record; a courtroom of a community court; the courtroom of a magisterial district judge; a courtroom of the Philadelphia Municipal Court; a courtroom of the Pittsburgh Magistrates Court; a courtroom of the Traffic Court of Philadelphia; judge's chambers; witness rooms; jury deliberation rooms; attorney conference rooms; prisoner holding cells; offices of court clerks, the district attorney, the sheriff and probation and parole officers; and any adjoining corridors.

"Dangerous weapon." A bomb, any explosive or incendiary device or material when possessed with intent to use or to provide such material to commit any offense, graded as a misdemeanor of the third degree or higher, grenade, blackjack, sandbag, metal knuckles, dagger, knife (the blade of which is exposed in an automatic way by switch, push-button, spring mechanism or otherwise) or other implement for the infliction of serious bodily injury which serves no common lawful purpose.

"Firearm." Any weapon, including a starter gun, which will or is designed to expel a projectile or projectiles by the action of an explosion, expansion of gas or escape of gas. The term does not include any device designed or used exclusively for the firing of stud cartridges, explosive rivets or similar industrial ammunition.

(June 13, 1995, 1st Sp.Sess., P.L.1024, No.17, eff. 120 days; Nov. 22, 1995, P.L.621, No.66, eff. imd.; Dec. 15, 1999, P.L.915, No.59, eff. 60 days; Nov. 30, 2004, P.L.1618, No.207, eff. 60 days; Feb. 25, 2014, P.L.33, No.16, eff. 60 days)

2014 Amendment. Act 16 amended subsec. (f).

2004 Amendment. See section 29 of Act 207 in the appendix to this title for special provisions relating to construction of law.

1999 Amendment. Act 59 amended subsec. (e).

1995 Amendments. Act 17, 1st Sp.Sess., added section 913 and Act 66 amended subsecs. (c) and (e). See the preamble to Act 17, 1st Sp.Sess., in the appendix to this title for special provisions relating to legislative purpose.

Cross References. Section 913 is referred to in section 6138 of Title 61 (Prisons and Parole).

§ 3101. Qualifications of judicial officers generally.

- (a) **General rule.**--Judges and magisterial district judges shall be citizens of this Commonwealth. Judges, except judges of the Pittsburgh Magistrates Court and the Traffic Court of Philadelphia, shall be members of the bar of this Commonwealth. Judges of the Supreme, Superior and Commonwealth Courts, for a period of one year preceding their election or appointment and during their continuance in office, shall reside within this Commonwealth. Other judges and magisterial district judges, for a period of one year preceding their election or appointment and during their continuance in office, shall reside within their respective districts, except when temporarily assigned to another district pursuant to law. Judges and magisterial district judges shall be at least 21 years of age.
- (b) **Mental health review officers.**--Mental health review officers shall be members of the bar of this Commonwealth without restriction as to county of residence and where possible should be familiar with the field of mental health. Judges of the Philadelphia Municipal Court may be appointed mental health review officers.

(Apr. 28, 1978, P.L.202, No.53, eff. 60 days; Oct. 5, 1980, P.L.693, No.142, eff. 60 days; May 27, 1994, P.L.250, No.37, eff. imd.; Nov. 30, 2004, P.L.1618, No.207, eff. 60 days)

2004 Amendment. Act 207 amended subsec. (a). See section 29 of Act 207 in the appendix to this title for special provisions relating to construction of law.

Cross References. Section 3101 is referred to in sections 3131, 4121 of this title.

**PENNSYLVANIA RULES OF CONDUCT, OFFICE STANDARDS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE FOR
MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT JUDGES**

Rule 101. Establishment of Offices. Minimum Office Standards.

Rule 101. Establishment of Offices. Minimum Office Standards.

- (A) The governing body of the county shall establish an office or offices for each magisterial district judge whose magisterial district is situated in the county at such locations within the county as may be approved by the president judge of the court of common pleas of the judicial district which includes the county. The governing body shall insofar as possible insure that each office meets the following minimum standards:
- (1) The principal office should be located in a place convenient to the public and which will allow the business of the office to be conducted with dignity, decorum and dispatch.

- (2) Such office shall not be located in or appurtenant to the residence or place of business of the magisterial district judge. It shall have a hearing room and such other rooms as may be necessary, and shall be provided with necessary furniture and equipment.
 - (3) A magisterial district judge shall be provided with such staff, forms, supplies and equipment as shall be necessary for the proper performance of his or her duties. To maintain the dignity of the office, he or she shall be provided with judicial robes.
- (B) The office of a magisterial district judge may be located outside of the boundaries of the magisterial district from which the judge is elected, upon petition of the president judge of the judicial district, provided:
- (1) The magisterial district in which the office is located adjoins the magisterial district from which the judge is elected;
 - (2) Relocation of the office would not cause inconvenience or confusion to the public or to law enforcement;
 - (3) The president judge certifies that the proposed location is more suitable or affordable than the facilities that are available within the magisterial district from which the judge is elected; and
 - (4) Approval for the relocation has been granted by the Supreme Court.
- (C) Petitions for approval of a relocation of a magisterial district judge's office outside of the magisterial district from which he or she has been elected shall be forwarded to the Court Administrator of Pennsylvania and shall provide information to determine whether the conditions for approval have been satisfied. If the Court Administrator determines that the requirements are met, the petition will be forwarded to the Supreme Court for consideration.

Comment

Consolidated districts must provide separate courtrooms and facilities for separate staff of the magisterial districts that have been consolidated. Districts must comply with standards published by the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts for magisterial district courtrooms. Petitions for relocation must be published for public comment and hearing before the petition is submitted to the Court Administrator.

Source

The provisions of this Rule 101 amended November 21, 1975, 5 Pa.B. 3020; amended April 25, 1979, effective May 25, 1979, 9 Pa.B. 1499; amended August 5, 2014, effective September 4, 2014, 44 Pa.B. 5564. Immediately preceding text appears at serial page (348672).

PENNSYLVANIA RULES OF JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS UNDER TITLE II OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT Rules 250-252.

Source

The provisions of this Chapter 2 adopted December 21, 2007, effective January 1, 2008, 38 Pa.B. 220, unless otherwise noted.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS UNDER TITLE II OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Rule 250. Policy.

It is the policy of the Unified Judicial System to prohibit discrimination against any individual with a disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”), 42 U.S.C. §12131 et seq., in accessing or participating in judicial proceedings or other services, programs, or activities of the Unified Judicial System.

Source

The provisions of this Rule 250 adopted March 3, 2014, effective immediately, 44 Pa.B. 1419.

Rule 251. Scope.

These rules shall apply to each UJS entity which includes, but is not limited to, all appellate courts, judicial districts, boards, committees and agencies under the administrative authority of the Supreme Court. These rules relating to reasonable accommodations under Title II of the ADA do not supersede either the requirements of 42 Pa.C.S.A. §4401 et seq., relating to Court Interpreters for Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, or the Administrative Regulations Governing Court Interpreters for Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

Official Note: The Administrative Regulations Governing Court Interpreters for Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (204 Pa. Code §101 et seq.) and 42 Pa.C.S.A. §4401 et seq. provide standards for court interpreters in judicial proceedings. “Judicial proceeding” is defined as “an action, appeal or proceeding in any court of this Commonwealth.” 2 Pa.C.S. §101. Title II of the ADA requires an interpreter for the deaf or hard of hearing for all programs, services or activities of the UJS. 42 U.S.C.A. §12132; 28 C.F.R. §35.160.

Source

The provisions of this Rule 251 adopted March 3, 2014, effective immediately, 44 Pa.B. 1419.

Rule 252. Reasonable accommodations.

- A. Each UJS entity shall develop a written policy to receive and process requests for reasonable accommodations from individuals with disabilities. The policy shall be posted on each UJS entity's respective website and in each facility.
- B. All Policies Developed Must Be Substantially Similar To The Policy Appended To This Rule (Appendix A) And Shall Contain, At A Minimum, The Following Elements:
 - 1. Appointment of an ADA coordinator—the coordinator must be identified on all court or program materials and the following information shall be provided: the coordinator's name, work address, work fax number or e-mail address and work telephone number.
 - 2. Notice of the right to request free accommodation(s).
 - 3. Explanation of the process for requesting accommodation(s).
 - 4. Time line for request and response.
- C. Each UJS entity shall develop a form substantially similar to the one appended to this rule (Appendix A) for processing requests for reasonable accommodations.
- D. Each UJS entity shall adopt and publish a grievance procedure, substantially similar to the procedure appended to this rule (Appendix B), for requests that have been denied in whole or in part. Any denial of an accommodation request based upon undue burden or fundamental alteration to services and programs shall be put in writing by the head of the entity or his or her designee and shall provide specific reasons for the denial.
- E. Within six (6) months of the adoption of this rule, each UJS entity shall provide the Administrative Office with a copy of their ADA policy and form and their grievance procedure and form as outlined in sections A—D above.

Source

The provisions of this Rule 252 adopted March 3, 2014, effective immediately, 44 Pa.B. 1419.

Appendix A

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (TITLE II) POLICY

Source

The provisions of this Appendix A adopted March 3, 2014, effective immediately, 44 Pa.B. 1419.

The Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania (UJS) complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which provides that “no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity”.

42 U.S.C.A. §12132. Pursuant to that requirement, if you are an individual with a disability who needs an accommodation in order to participate in any judicial proceeding or any other service, program, or activity of the UJS, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. The ADA does not require the (UJS entity name here) to take any action that would fundamentally alter the nature of its programs or services, or impose an undue financial or administrative burden.

If you require an accommodation under the ADA, it is recommended that you make your request as soon as possible or at least three (3) business days before your scheduled participation in any court proceeding or UJS program or activity. All requests for accommodation, regardless of timeliness, will be given due consideration and if necessary, may require an interactive process between the requestor and the (name of UJS entity) to determine the best course of action.

To request a reasonable accommodation, please complete the *Request for Reasonable Accommodation Form* (Appendix B) and return it to:

Name(s), Business Address(es), Fax Number(s) and / or e-mail address(es), Telephone Number(s) of the ADA Coordinator

If you need assistance completing this form, contact the ADA Coordinator. Complaints alleging violations of Title II under the ADA may be filed pursuant to the UJS Grievance Procedure with (name and contact information of individual who handles grievance procedures). A response will be sent to you after careful review of the facts.



APPENDIX A
FOR USE BY JUDICIAL DISTRICTS ONLY

UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM OF PENNSYLVANIA

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT ACCOMMODATION (ADA) TITLE II REQUEST FOR REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION FORM (INCLUDES REQUEST FOR INTERPRETER FOR HEARING/SPEECH IMPAIRED)	
Client Information – Section A	
Name: _____	Phone: _____
Address: _____	Email: _____
_____	Mobile: _____
Please check the box that most closely describes your status in this matter: <input type="checkbox"/> Litigant <input type="checkbox"/> Plaintiff <input type="checkbox"/> Defendant <input type="checkbox"/> Parent <input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/> Witness <input type="checkbox"/> Attorney <input type="checkbox"/> Victim <input type="checkbox"/> Juror <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain) _____	
Requestor Information (if different from above)	
Name: _____	Bus. Phone/ Mobile: _____
Address: _____	Fax: _____
Relationship to Client: _____	Email: _____
_____	TTY: _____
Accommodation	
Nature of the disability for which an accommodation is requested: _____	
Accommodation requested: _____	
Location of Proceeding	Proceeding Information (if known)
<input type="checkbox"/> Magisterial District Court No. _____ District Judge Name: _____	Case #: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Criminal Division <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Division <input type="checkbox"/> Orphans' Court Division	Case Name: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Family Division <input type="checkbox"/> Adult <input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile	Judge: _____
Specify Address: _____	Proceeding Date: _____ Proceeding Time: _____
_____	Proceeding Type: _____
AFTER COMPLETING THE FORM, PLEASE SEND TO: COUNTY ADA COORDINATOR	
I hereby certify that an Americans with Disabilities Act accommodation is required in the above-captioned action on the date stated. Signature: _____ Date: _____	
FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY	
A SERVICE REQUEST HAS BEEN MADE FOR THE CLIENT NAMED ABOVE.	
Service Provider Company: _____	Fax: _____
Individual Interpreter Name: _____	Email: _____
Bus. Phone/ Mobile: _____	Date to Provider: _____
Court Official Verification – Section C	
VERIFYING OFFICIAL SHALL MAINTAIN A COPY IN THE COURT'S CASE FILE AND PROVIDE THE ORIGINAL TO THE SERVICE PROVIDER FOR SUBMISSION WITH BILLING.	
I hereby verify that the services were performed by the provider in the above-captioned action on the date and time stated.	
Start Date & Time: _____	End Date & Time: _____
Court Official: _____ (Please print name)	Signature: _____
Title: _____	Date: _____



APPENDIX A

UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM OF PENNSYLVANIA

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT ACCOMMODATION (ADA) TITLE II REQUEST FOR REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION FORM
(INCLUDES REQUEST FOR INTERPRETER FOR HEARING /SPEECH IMPAIRED)

Client Information – Section A

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Mobile: _____

Please check the box that most closely describes your status in this matter:

☐ Litigant ☐ Plaintiff ☐ Defendant ☐ Parent ☐ Child ☐ Witness ☐ Attorney ☐ Victim ☐ Juror

☐ Other (please explain) _____

Requestor Information (if different from above)

Name: _____

Bus. Phone/

Mobile: _____

Address: _____

Fax: _____

Relationship
to Client: _____

Email: _____

TTY: _____

Accommodation

Nature of the disability for which an
accommodation is requested: _____

Accommodation
requested: _____

Location of Proceeding

Name of Office: _____

Address: _____

Proceeding Information (if known)

Case #: _____

Case Name: _____

Judge: _____

Proceeding

Date: _____

Proceeding

Time: _____

Proceeding

Type: _____

AFTER COMPLETING THE FORM, PLEASE SEND TO: ADA COORDINATOR

I hereby certify that an Americans with Disabilities Act accommodation is required in the above-captioned action on the date stated.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

A SERVICE REQUEST HAS BEEN MADE FOR THE CLIENT NAMED ABOVE.

Service Provider

Company: _____

Individual

Interpreter Name: _____

Bus. Phone/

Mobile: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

Date to

Provider: _____

Appendix B
Americans with Disabilities Act (Title II)
Grievance Procedure
Source

The provisions of this Appendix B adopted March 3, 2014, effective immediately, 44 Pa.B. 1419.

This grievance procedure is established for the prompt resolution of complaints alleging any violation of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the provision of services, programs, or activities by the Unified Judicial System (UJS). If you require a reasonable accommodation to complete this form, or need this form in an alternate format, please contact [ADA coordinator information].

To file a complaint under the Grievance Procedure please take the following steps:

1. Complete the complaint form and return to [ADA coordinator or designated individual]. Alternative means of filing complaints will be made available for persons with disabilities upon request. The complaint should be submitted as soon as possible but no later than sixty (60) calendar days after the alleged violation.
2. Within fifteen (15) calendar days of receipt of the complaint, the [ADA coordinator or designated individual] will investigate the complaint, including, meeting with the individual seeking an accommodation, either in person or via telephone, to discuss the complaint and the possible resolutions. Within fifteen (15) calendar days of the meeting, the [ADA coordinator or designated individual] will respond in writing, and where appropriate, in a format accessible to the complainant, such as large print, braille, or audio. The response will explain the position of the [name of UJS entity] and offer options for substantive resolution of the complaint.
3. If the response to the complaint does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, the complainant may appeal the decision within fifteen (15) calendar days after receipt of the response to [designated individual]. Within fifteen (15) calendar days after receipt of the appeal, the [designated individual] will meet with the complainant to discuss the complaint and possible resolutions. Within fifteen (15) calendar days after the meeting, the [designated individual] will respond in writing, and, where appropriate, in a format accessible to the complainant, with a final resolution of the complaint.

This grievance procedure is informal. An individual's participation in this informal process is completely voluntary. Use of this grievance procedure is not a prerequisite to and does not preclude a complainant from pursuing other remedies available under law.

The UJS Policy on Non-Discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity also encompasses disability-related issues and provides complaint procedures for UJS court users. Any employment-related disability discrimination complaints will be governed by the UJS Policy on Nondiscrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity.



APPENDIX B

UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM OF PENNSYLVANIA

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) TITLE II GRIEVANCE FORM	
Grievant Information	
Grievant Name: _____	Home Phone (include area code): _____
Address: _____	Business Phone (include area code): _____
	Mobile Phone (include area code): _____
Alternative Contact Person (other than Grievant)	
Name: _____	Home Phone (include area code): _____
Address: _____	Business Phone (include area code): _____
	Relationship To Client: _____
Court Service, Program or Facility Allegedly in Violation	
Date and Location of Alleged Violation (dd/mm/yyyy)	
Description of Alleged Violation and Requested Remedy	
Has this case been filed with the Department of Justice or other government agency or court?	
Yes No	
If You Answered "Yes" to the Previous Question, Complete the Following	
Agency or Court: _____	Contact Person: _____
Address: _____	Phone (include area code): _____
	Date Filed: _____
Other Comments	
Signature: _____ Date: _____	

NOTE: FILLABLE FORMS ARE AVAILABLE ON THE UJS WEBSITE

(<http://www.pacourts.us/forms/for-the-public>)

CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS, EMERGENCY ACTIONS, EMERGENCY UNITS AND JUDICIAL SECURITY

By Supreme Court [order](#), entered March 17, 2021, Pa.R.J.A. Nos. 1950-1952 and 1954 are amended, **effective January 1, 2022**. However, the certification requirement for emergency action plans does not take effect until **January 1, 2023**. Recommended by the Magisterial District Court Security Task Group² (see [§I BACKGROUND](#)), the rule [revisions](#) require implementation of emergency action plans for court facilities; inclusion of the district court administrator, a magisterial district judge, and a member of the county executive branch as members of the local court security committee; and biannual meetings of the local security committee.

Rule 1950. Definitions.

Emergency—an emergency is an event or events that causes or threatens the destruction or partial destruction of court facilities, significantly interrupts the performance of court operations, or poses a threat to the health or safety of court personnel, court users or the public.

Continuity of operations—continuity of operations is the process, during and following an emergency, by which a court maintains at least minimum levels of service. *Court facility*—court facility includes the courtrooms, judicial chambers, witness rooms, jury deliberation rooms, attorney conference rooms, court administrative offices and any other office or space under the control of or supervised by the judiciary.

President judge—for the purposes of these rules, “president judge” refers to the president judge of the judicial district.

Security incident—a security incident is an event that has the potential to cause, or has in fact caused, personal injury or property damage.

Official Note: See also definitions in Pa.R.J.A. No. 102.

Source

The provisions of Rule 1950 are adopted December 28, 2009, effective immediately, 40 Pa.B. 218.

Rule 1951. Continuity of operations.

(a) Responsibility for Continuity of Operations and Emergency Planning.

- (A) The court administrator shall establish minimum standards and procedures for continuity of operations and other emergency plans. The standards shall include procedures for periodic review, including the procedures for conducting exercises to ensure the efficacy of the plan.

- (B) The president judge has primary responsibility for planning for the continuity of operations in the event of an emergency, and for implementing such plans in his or her judicial district.

Official Note: See also Pa.R.J.A. No. 1954.

(b) Continuity of Operations Plans.

- (1) Pursuant to the standards and procedures established by the Court Administrator in Rule 1951(A)(1), the president judge, in conjunction with the district court administrator and any other relevant individuals designated by the president judge shall, in consultation with county emergency service agencies and other governmental entities, develop a plan to provide for the continuity of court operations during and following the occurrence of an emergency.
- (2) The continuity of operations plan shall provide for the continuation or immediate resumption of court business by the most expeditious and practical means possible, consistent with continuity of operations standards as established by the Court Administrator.
- (3) The president judge shall be responsible for ensuring that the continuity of operations plan is accurate and updated as needed.
- (4) On an annual basis, the president judge shall review the continuity of operations plan and shall certify on a form prescribed by the Court Administrator that the review has taken place and that the plan is accurate and meets the requirements established by the Court Administrator.

Comment

Fires. Floods. Hurricanes, earthquakes and tornados. Terrorist attacks. Pandemics. Nuclear and biohazardous accidents (and attacks). The experiences from other states and countries around the world have shown that if any of these events should occur in Pennsylvania, the results could be catastrophic.

State and local governments, and in particular chief judges and court administrators, have learned from the experiences of governments in places where natural and human-made disasters have occurred, for example: the state and city of New York in the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks; the city of Toronto in Canada's Ontario Province after the 2003 SARS outbreak; the Gulf Coast states, such as Louisiana and Florida in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and other devastating storms; and California, among other states, coping with calamitous wildfires and earthquakes. One lesson learned is that many of the difficulties citizens face during and after an emergency or disaster can be ameliorated if the court system is operational and providing at least its essential functions.

In an attempt to plan and prepare for a wide variety of emergencies that could strike Pennsylvania, the Supreme Court has adopted new Rules of Judicial Administration Nos. 1950—1954. Rules 1951—1953, designed to become operational only in the event of a significant emergency that causes or threatens the disruption of court operations, were derived in part from “judicial emergency” rules and statutes developed in other states such as Florida, California and Louisiana. The Rules specify that the primary authority and responsibility for continuing court operations rests with the Supreme Court and with the president judges of Pennsylvania’s 60 judicial districts. Rule 1954 consolidates judicial security practices and directives developed over the past several years.

Rule 1951 formalizes the requirement that each judicial district in Pennsylvania develop and practice emergency and continuity of operations plans. Under this Rule, the Court Administrator of Pennsylvania is responsible for establishing standards and procedures for emergency and continuity of operations plans, and the president judges of Pennsylvania’s judicial districts, with the assistance of the district court administrators, are responsible for developing plans for their respective judicial districts. Continuity of operations plans must provide for the continuation or immediate resumption of court business—or at least essential functions—during and immediately following an emergency. The Rule calls for these plans to be reviewed and updated annually.

Source

The provisions of Rule 1951 are adopted December 28, 2009, effective immediately, 40 Pa.B. 218.

Rule 1952. Emergency actions, duties and authorities.

(a) Role of Supreme Court

- (1) In the event of an emergency that affects court operations in the Commonwealth or in one or more judicial districts, the Supreme Court shall have the authority to declare a judicial emergency generally or in any judicial district affected by the emergency.
- (2) By the declaration of a judicial emergency, the Supreme Court may:
 - (A) Suspend or modify statewide or local procedural or administrative court rules;
 - (B) Suspend time calculations for the purposes of time computation relevant to court cases or other judicial business;
 - (C) Direct a court to sit in a location other than its normal place of operations, including outside of its judicial district;
 - (D) Assign judges or court personnel from outside the affected judicial district;
 - (E) Authorize additional uses of advanced communication technology to conduct court proceedings;

- (F) Take any action listed in rule 1952(b)(2)(a)-(r) for an individual or multiple judicial districts; and
- (G) Take any other necessary administrative action regarding judicial staff, court facilities and operations.

Official Note: See also Pa.R.J.A. No. 1952(B)(2) for actions a president judge may take once a judicial emergency has been declared.

See Pa.R.Crim.P. 103 for the definition of advanced communication technology.

See Pa.R.Crim.P. 118 and 119 for general rules governing the use of two-way simultaneous audio-visual communications in criminal proceedings.

(b) Role of the President Judge

- (1) In the event of an emergency, the president judge may request authorization from the Supreme Court to declare a judicial emergency in the judicial district. Such declaration shall remain in effect until such time as it is amended, rescinded, modified or superseded by order of the Supreme Court.
- (2) If the Supreme Court authorizes the president judge to declare a judicial emergency in the judicial district, and unless limited by the Supreme Court, the president judge shall have the authority to:
 - (A) order the closure of court facilities until safe operations of the court and its offices can be restored;
 - (B) order the evacuation of court facilities;

Official Note: Ordering the evacuation of court facilities, when practical under the circumstances, should occur after consultation with members of the local standing court security committee, established under Rule of Judicial Administration No. 1954(A), and relevant law enforcement agencies.

- (C) direct the relocation of court operations to safe locations;
- (D) take necessary action to provide for (i) the safety of court personnel, court users and the public, and (ii) the security of court facilities, financial and cash operations, equipment and records;
- (E) establish a telephone hotline or web site to provide the bench, bar and the public with court and emergency information;
- (F) reassign judges or court personnel within the judicial district as needed to ensure the continuation of operations;

Official Note: See also Rule of Judicial Administration No. 1953 for requests for additional

judges from within the Emergency Regional Administrative Unit.

(G) expand the duties and work hours of staff to handle emergency matters;

(H) cancel or modify court calendars, subpoenas or other court orders;

(I) cancel or suspend jury and non-jury trials;

(J) cancel or suspend jury duty;

(K) suspend or modify local rules of court and administrative rules or procedures, including personnel policies;

(L) suspend or modify the time requirements and limitations established by local rule;

(M) make application to the Supreme Court to temporarily suspend or modify statewide court rules as applied to any case or cases in the judicial district;

(N) provide for alternative signing, delivery and service of court documents and orders;

(O) extend the duration of any emergency or temporary order (for example, protection from abuse order) issued by a judge or magisterial district judge in the judicial district;

(P) assign custodial responsibility for court funds;

(Q) ensure compliance with any Federal, State or local emergency declarations;

(R) order the full or partial implementation of the continuity of operations plan established pursuant to Rule of Judicial Administration No. 1951; and

(S) request additional emergency judicial orders from the Supreme Court as the needs of justice require.

(3) The president judge shall immediately notify the Court Administrator of any emergency occurring within his or her court or judicial district that causes the closure of court facilities, causes the temporary suspension of court operations or causes the full or partial implementation of the court's continuity of operations plan.

(4) Requests for emergency judicial orders pursuant to Rule 1952(B)(1) or 1952(B)(2)(s) shall be made to the Court Administrator on a form substantially similar to the one appended to this Rule. Upon receiving a request for an emergency judicial order, the Court Administrator shall immediately transmit said request to (1) the Chief Justice of Pennsylvania or another Justice designated by the Chief Justice and (2) to the Supreme Court Prothonotary. Emergency judicial orders may be signed by the Chief Justice or another Justice designated by the Chief Justice to handle emergency applications for relief. Facsimile signatures may be used in lieu of original signatures on emergency judicial orders. Objections to emergency judicial orders from the Supreme Court shall be transmitted to the Supreme Court Prothonotary in a manner prescribed by the Supreme Court.

- (5) During an emergency, the provisions of any statewide procedural rules that require submission of local rules, including administrative orders, to the Supreme Court, the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, a statewide procedural rules committee, or the Legislative Reference Bureau for publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin, shall not apply to any local rules or administrative orders issued in response to the emergency. The president judge of the affected judicial district shall inform the Supreme Court of any local rule or administrative order issued under this paragraph as soon as practicable.

Official Note: See Pa.R.J.A. No. 103(c) and (d) for local rule adoption procedures.

(c) Role of the Court Administrator

- (1) The Court Administrator shall render such assistance as practicable and proper to judicial districts affected by an emergency and to assist in the continuity of operations.
- (2) The Court Administrator shall coordinate efforts of the Unified Judicial System to provide relief to judicial districts affected by an emergency, including providing available resources and personnel from other judicial districts.

Official Note: See also Pa.R.J.A. No. 701.

- (3) The Court Administrator shall provide information concerning the emergency to appropriate governmental and non-governmental entities in a timely manner.
- (4) In the event the Court Administrator is notified of an emergency that causes the temporary closure of court operations, the Court Administrator shall immediately advise the Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the Pennsylvania Senate and the Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives of such emergency.

Official Note: See Pa.R.J.A. No. 1952(B)(4) regarding requests for emergency judicial orders.

- (5) All requests for emergency judicial orders submitted to the Supreme Court, all emergency judicial orders issued by the Supreme Court, and all emergency judicial orders issued by president judges shall, to the extent possible and practical under the circumstances, be promptly and conspicuously posted on the Unified Judicial System web site.

(d) Role of the District Court Administrator

- (1) The district court administrator shall assist the president judge in planning for emergencies and for the continuation of court operations in the event of an emergency.

Official Note: See Pa.R.J.A. Nos. 1951(A)(2) and (B)(1) for the development of continuity of operations plans.

- (2) In the event of an emergency, the district court administrator shall assist the president judge in implementing continuity of operations plans.

Official Note: See Pa.R.J.A. No. 1951(A)(2) for the president judge’s authority to implement continuity of operations plans.

- (3) In the event of an emergency, unless otherwise specified in the continuity of operations plan, the district court administrator shall:
- (a) gather information from state and local officials, health and safety personnel, and any other relevant individuals or information sources to advise the president judge if the continuity of operations plan should be activated;
 - (b) prepare the continuity of operations plan notification for approval by the president judge and disseminate the notification;
 - (c) coordinate court personnel and resource deployment to an alternate facility;
 - (d) assist the sheriff and courthouse security in the movement of jurors, prisoners and the public, and assist with the general security of court and alternate facilities;
 - (e) ensure that all emergency judicial orders are promptly posted conspicuously in the affected judicial district and that they are transmitted to the Court Administrator in as prompt a manner as circumstances permit;
 - (f) manage alternate facility operations;
 - (g) provide timely information to the president judge and Court Administrator on the performance of court operations;
 - (h) ensure personnel issues are addressed and resolved; and
 - (i) confirm and communicate to the president judge when the emergency situation has ended.
- (4) Once normal court operations are resumed, the district court administrator shall communicate with judges, staff and other appropriate individuals and entities to develop an after-action report to be transmitted to the Court Administrator and in conjunction with the continuity of operations plan review mandated in Rule of Judicial Administration No. 1951(B)(4).

Comment

Rule of Judicial Administration No. 1952 clarifies a non-exhaustive list of actions the Supreme Court may order during an emergency. In addition to declaring a “judicial emergency” in one or several judicial districts, the Rule specifies numerous judicial and administrative actions the Supreme Court may order to continue and protect the judicial process, as well as the rights of litigants and the public. In addition, Pa.R.J.A. No. 1952 details the role of the president judges during and after an emergency. Under this Rule, and subject to Supreme Court approval and oversight, the president judges of each judicial district are given wide authority to order that

extraordinary measures be taken to protect the public, court users and staff and to continue court operations during and after an emergency.

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA

In Re: _____ Judicial District—Request for Emergency Judicial Order

1. _____, President Judge of the _____ Judicial District, hereby requests the following relief by Order of the Supreme Court:

a. Authorize the president judge to declare a judicial emergency in this judicial district and take any actions authorized by Pa.R.J.A. No. 1952(B)(2).

b. Suspend or modify statewide procedural or administrative rules in this judicial district as follows:

1. Suspend time calculations for the purposes of time computation within this judicial district for the filing of documents with the court or taking other judicially mandated action. Beginning date, ending date _____.

2. Authorize the expanded use of advanced communication technology to conduct court proceedings as follows:

3. Suspend or modify other statewide procedural or administrative rules as follows:

c. Grant other relief as follows:

2. The circumstances necessitating this request for an emergency judicial order are as follows:

3. To the extent possible and practical under the circumstances, notice of this request for an emergency judicial order has been or will be:

_____ posted in the courthouse or other judicial office

_____ posted on the court's or county's web site

_____ posted on the county bar association's web site

_____ submitted to the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts for publication pursuant to Rule of Judicial Administration No. 1952(C)(5)

_____ published in the legal publication designated by the court for publication of legal notices

_____ published in a newspaper of general circulation within the county

4. Interested parties are advised that objections to any emergency judicial order issued by the Supreme Court should be transmitted to the Supreme Court Prothonotary.

Signed:

Dated:

Source

The provisions of Rule 1952 are adopted December 28, 2009, effective immediately, 40 Pa.B. 218; amended June 28, 2016, effective August 1, 2016, 46 Pa.B. 3790. Immediately preceding text appears at serial pages (357743) to (357747).

Rule 1953. Emergency regional administrative units.

- (a) Within sixty (60) days of the adoption of this Rule, the Court Administrator shall recommend to the Supreme Court the number and designation of "emergency regional administrative units," ensuring that every judicial district in the Commonwealth is included within an "emergency regional administrative unit" with one or more neighboring judicial districts.

Official Note: The units created pursuant to this rule are similar to those created pursuant to Pa.R.J.A. No. 701(E).

- (b) In the event of an emergency affecting any court's operations, causing the partial or full implementation of a court's continuity of operations plan under Rule 1951, or if the Supreme Court or president judge declares a judicial emergency under Rule 1952 (A)(1) or (B)(1), the president judge of the affected judicial district or districts may activate the respective emergency regional administrative unit by providing notice to the Court Administrator. Once activated, judges and magisterial district judges may be temporarily assigned to another judicial district within the emergency regional administrative unit as if the judicial districts were operating within a unit created under Pa.R.J.A. No. 701(E).
- (c) All judges and magisterial district judges assigned to another judicial district pursuant to this Rule shall have the same power and authority as that vested in a judge or magisterial district judge of that judicial district.

Official Note: See also Pa.R.J.A. No. 701(E).

- (d) Whenever a judge or magisterial district judge is assigned to another judicial district pursuant to this Rule, notice shall immediately be sent to the Court Administrator of Pennsylvania.
- (e) All expenses of any jurist assigned to another judicial district pursuant to this Rule shall be reimbursed as provided by law.

Comment

Rule 1953 is designed as a companion to Rule of Judicial Administration No. 701(E). Pursuant to Rule 701(E), president judges may petition the Supreme Court to combine with other judicial districts and form "regional administrative units." Within each regional administrative unit, judges from one judicial district may be temporarily assigned to another judicial district within the unit without first obtaining a judicial assignment order from the Supreme Court. At present, only about half of Pennsylvania's 60 judicial districts are included within a Rule 701 regional administrative unit. Rule 1953 authorizes the creation of "Emergency Regional Administrative Units" covering all of Pennsylvania's 60 judicial districts. Through this Rule, in the event of an emergency judges and magisterial district judges from one judicial district within an emergency regional administrative unit may be assigned to another judicial district within the unit without first obtaining a Supreme Court order authorizing the temporary assignment. The Rule directs the Court Administrator of Pennsylvania to recommend to the Supreme Court the number and designation of emergency regional administrative units within 60 days of the adoption of this new Rule.

Source

The provisions of Rule 1953 are adopted December 28, 2009, effective immediately, 40 Pa.B. 218.

Rule 1954. Judicial security.

- (a) The president judge of each judicial district shall establish a local standing court security committee. The duties of the local standing court security committee shall be to:
 - (1) make recommendations to the president judge on protocols, policies and procedures necessary to protect the public, court personnel and court facilities in the event of an emergency;
 - (2) communicate the approved protocols, policies and procedures identified in Rule of Judicial Administration No. 1954(A)(1) to all court employees;
 - (3) review and assess all security incident reports specified in Rule of Judicial Administration No. 1954(B) and recommend to the president judge appropriate actions;
 - (4) develop and recommend to the president judge training programs for court employees on safety and security awareness.

Official Note: When forming local standing court security committees, president judges should consider a variety of court and county employees as well as public officials whose positions, experience and authority would benefit court security decisions. While not an exhaustive list, the president judge may consider: a member of the county executive branch, the district court administrator, a magisterial district judge, an individual responsible for county and court records, an individual responsible for courthouse security, a courthouse facility or risk manager and a member of county or local law enforcement.

- (b) The president judge shall ensure that all reporting requirements of the Pennsylvania Judicial Incident Reporting System (“PAJIRS”) are completed by the district court administrator or his or her designee no later than the close of business on the day that any reportable action occurs.
- (c) The president judge shall ensure the completion of court facility security assessments as identified in the Unified Judicial System Court Safety and Security Manual and as prescribed by the Court Administrator.
- (d) The president judge shall establish court security protocols, policies and procedures to be implemented in the event of an emergency, including, but not limited to: fire, natural disaster, “white powder” or other human-made emergency or disaster, and escaped prisoner and hostage situations. The president judge shall ensure that all employees

receive training on how and when to implement such protocols, policies and procedures. All policies and procedures identified in this Rule shall be reviewed and updated annually.

Comment

Rule 1954 addresses court security and formalizes the creation of local standing court security committees. These committees, which have existed in every judicial district since at least 2005, are appointed by the president judges. They make recommendations to the president judge on protocols, policies and procedures which should be implemented to protect the public, court personnel and court facilities in the event of an emergency, and the president judge must establish such security protocols, policies and procedures for the judicial district. In addition, each local standing court security committee is charged with reviewing court security incident reports collected through PAJIRS, which was implemented in 2005 for magisterial district courts and 2007 for common pleas courts, and making appropriate recommendations to the president judge based on those reports. Finally, Rule 1954 directs the president judges of Pennsylvania's judicial districts to complete and annually update court facility security assessments.

It is hoped that a significant natural or man-made emergency never impacts Pennsylvania. However, through the framework provided in Rules 1950—1954, should an emergency occur, Pennsylvania Courts will be prepared to provide at least minimum services, including all essential court functions, both during and after the emergency, to better protect and serve Pennsylvania's citizens.

Source

The provisions of Rule 1954 are adopted December 28, 2009, effective immediately, 40 Pa.B. 218.

COURT ORDERS

IN RE: ACT 207-2004

Order No. 269 Judicial Administration Docket No. 1

"AND NOW, this 6th day of January, 2005, in accordance with Act 207 of 2004 which changes the title of "district justice" to "magisterial district judge", it is hereby ORDERED: Pursuant to the authority set forth by Article V, Section 10(c) of the Constitution of Pennsylvania and the general supervisory and administrative authority of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania set forth by 42 Pa.C.S. Section 1701, et seq., (Judicial Code), that all references in any court rule, court order, court form (including citation), automated statewide court case management system (i.e. PACMS, CPCMS and DJS) or any other legal authority, except as provided for in Act 207, to "district justice" shall be deemed a reference to "magisterial district judge." This Order is effective January 29, 2005."

REPORTS

Report of the Special Courts Administration Subcommittee Intergovernmental Task Force to Study the District Justice System, *in pertinent part*:

The following are the ten major areas addressed by the Subcommittee's recommendations and a summary of each recommendation:

4. The Subcommittee recommends that the Supreme Court, by general rule, adopt further specific minimum standards for district court facilities and equipment. Also, the Subcommittee recommends several technology enhancements for the district courts, including a recommendation to study the feasibility of electronic filing of cases.

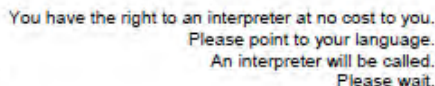
Link to the Full Report:

<http://www.pacourts.us/news-and-statistics/reports/intergovernmental-task-force-to-study-the-district-justice-system>

POSTERS

Your Right to an Interpreter

Link to Poster: [Poster: Your Right to an Interpreter](#)



Magisterial District Court Facility, Equipment & Security Guidelines
March 2021/version 2.1
Appendix A-1 Page 25

In pertinent part:

2.4.1 Matters In Litigation

Notwithstanding the disposition schedules set forth herein, no record which is otherwise eligible for disposition shall be destroyed if the District becomes aware that the record may be needed for pending litigation. District Court Administrators or their designees, upon having the knowledge or belief of actual or impending litigation requiring the preservation of certain records, shall immediately so notify in writing the Record Retention Officer, and appropriate deputies or other staff, to ensure the preservation of the subject records, as well as suspending any destruction or transfer activities. Such records shall be retained until all related proceedings have been concluded or until such time as, in the written opinion of counsel for the District or the AOPC, the threat of litigation has been removed. (See also *§4.9 Litigation: Judicial Districts and Employees*)

2.4.2 Matters Pending Audit

Records subject to audit must be retained for the periods listed in the schedule and must be audited and all findings resolved before such records may be destroyed. Applicable Federal and State statutes and administrative regulations may necessitate retaining records for a longer period of time than indicated in the schedule. Information on specific program regulations should be obtained from the appropriate administering/funding/licensing agency.

5.2 Magisterial District Courts, Pittsburgh Municipal Court, Philadelphia Municipal Court Records

Link to the Complete Guidelines: [Record Retention & Disposition Schedule with Guidelines](#)

5.2 Magisterial District Courts, Pittsburgh Municipal Court, Philadelphia Municipal Court Records

Category	Time Measured From:	Mandatory Retention Period
TRAFFIC CITATIONS		
Traffic Citations - Disposed	From final disposition – payment of all monies due, satisfactory completion of all sentences imposed, and/or entry of an order terminating further court activity, except records for cases disposed under Pa. R.J.A. No. 1901. (See §4.6 Records Disposed Pursuant to Pa. R.J.A. No. 1901)	Retain 3 years.
CIVIL RECORDS		
Civil Original Papers	Entry of Judgments, except records for cases disposed under Pa. R.J.A. No. 1901. (See §4.6 Records Disposed Pursuant to Pa. R.J.A. No. 1901)	Retain 7 years.
	Discharge, Verdict, or Other Disposition Without Judgment, except records for cases disposed under Pa. R.J.A. No. 1901. (See §4.6 Records Disposed Pursuant to Pa. R.J.A. No. 1901)	Retain 3 years.
Civil Dockets	From final disposition in Magisterial District Court.	Retain 7 years.
Notes of Testimony (Including Audio, Digital, and Video Recordings)	Expiration of appeal period.	Retain 1 year.
CRIMINAL RECORDS		
Criminal Dockets & Indices	From final disposition – payment of all monies due, satisfactory completion of all sentences imposed, and/or entry of an order terminating further court activity.	Retain 7 years.
Original Papers in Misdemeanor and Felony Cases	From final disposition – payment of all monies due, satisfactory completion of all sentences imposed, and/or entry of an order terminating further court activity except records for cases disposed under Pa. R.J.A. No. 1901. (See §4.6 Records Disposed Pursuant to Pa. R.J.A. No. 1901)	Retain 3 years.
Non-Traffic Citations, & Summary Criminal Complaints	From final disposition – payment of all monies due, satisfactory completion of all sentences imposed, and/or entry of an order terminating further court activity, except records for cases disposed under Pa. R.J.A. No. 1901. (See §4.6 Records Disposed Pursuant to Pa. R.J.A. No. 1901)	Retain 3 years.
Magisterial District Courts/Pittsburgh Municipal/Philadelphia Municipal Courts General Correspondence Records Not Relating to Official Action Taken	Filing in Magisterial District Courts/Pittsburgh Municipal Court/Philadelphia Municipal Court.	Retain 1 year.
FINANCIAL RECORDS		
Financial Incoming Records: Journals, Ledgers, Receipts, Bank Statements, etc.	Close of the year for which the records apply.	Retain 7 years.
MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS		
Miscellaneous Matters Where Official Action Taken (Including Search Warrants and Affidavits)	Filing in Magisterial District Courts/Pittsburgh Municipal Court/Philadelphia Municipal Court.	Retain 3 years, except for unexecuted search warrants and affidavits which shall be destroyed pursuant to Pa.R.Crim.P. 212(B).



AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (TITLE II) POLICY

The Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania (UJS) complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which provides that “no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity”. 42 U.S.C.A. §12132. Pursuant to that requirement, if you are an individual with a disability who needs an accommodation in order to participate in any service, program, or activity of the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts, ("AOPC"), you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. The ADA does not require the AOPC to take any action that would fundamentally alter the nature of its programs or services, or impose an undue financial or administrative burden.

If you require an accommodation under the ADA, it is recommended that you make your request as soon as possible or at least three (3) business days before your scheduled participation in any AOPC program or activity. All requests for accommodation, regardless of timeliness, will be given due consideration and if necessary, may require an interactive process between the requestor and the AOPC to determine the best course of action.

To request a reasonable accommodation, please complete AOPC's *Request for Reasonable Accommodation Form* and return it to:

Mary Vilter, Esq.
ADA Coordinator, AOPC
1515 Market Street, Suite 1414
Philadelphia, PA 19102
215.560.6300 (phone)
215-560-5485 (fax)
Mary.Vilter@pacourts.us

If you need assistance completing this form, contact the ADA Coordinator.

Complaints alleging violations of Title II under the ADA may be filed pursuant to the UJS Grievance Procedure with Mary Vilter, ADA Coordinator. A response will be sent to you after careful review of the facts.



Americans with Disabilities Act (Title II) Grievance Procedure

This grievance procedure is established for the prompt resolution of complaints alleging any violation of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the provision of services, programs, or activities by the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts ("AOPC"). If you require a reasonable accommodation to complete this form, or need this form in an alternate format, please contact Mary Vilter, AOPC, 1515 Market Street, Suite 1414, Philadelphia, PA 19102, mary.vilter@pacourts.us, 215.560.6300.

To file a complaint under the Grievance Procedure please take the following steps:

1. Complete the complaint form and return to Mary Vilter, ADA Coordinator, contact information noted above. Alternative means of filing complaints will be made available for persons with disabilities upon request. The complaint should be submitted as soon as possible but no later than sixty (60) calendar days after the alleged violation.
2. Within fifteen (15) calendar days of receipt of the complaint, Mary Vilter, ADA Coordinator, or her designee, will investigate the complaint, including meeting with the individual seeking an accommodation, either in person or via telephone, to discuss the complaint and the possible resolutions. Within fifteen (15) calendar days of the meeting, Mary Vilter, ADA Coordinator, or her designee will respond in writing, and where appropriate, in a format accessible to the complainant, such as large print, Braille, or audio. The response will explain the position of the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts and offer options for substantive resolution of the complaint.
3. If the response to the complaint does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, the complainant may appeal the decision within fifteen (15) calendar days after receipt of the response to the Court Administrator, or his or her designee. Within fifteen (15) calendar days after receipt of the appeal, the Court Administrator or his or her designee will meet with the appellant, either in person or via telephone, to discuss the complaint and possible resolutions. Within fifteen (15) calendar days of this meeting, the Court Administrator or his or her designee will respond in writing, and, where appropriate, in a format accessible to the complainant, with a final resolution of the complaint.

This grievance procedure is informal. An individual's participation in this informal process is completely voluntary. Use of this grievance procedure is not a prerequisite to and does not preclude a complainant from pursuing other remedies available under law.

The UJS Policy on Non-Discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity also encompasses

disability-related issues and provides complaint procedures for UJS court users. Any employment-related disability discrimination complaints will be governed by the UJS Policy on Nondiscrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity.

Link to Policy & Procedures:

<http://www.pacourts.us/judicial-administration/court-programs/americans-with-disabilities-act>

All facilities should be accessible to persons with disabilities and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. State and local government facilities built after March 14, 2012 are required to comply with the 2010 Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design ("the 2010 ADA Standards"). The 2010 ADA Standards define minimum requirements for accommodations of persons with disabilities that must be applied during design, construction, or alteration of state and local government facilities. There is some flexibility with how a court responds to the requirements of the ADA. Compliance does not necessarily require entities to insure exorbitant costs. A reasonable accommodation can be as simple as rethinking how to modify a process. For example, if a public counter is too high for a person to receive service, a section of the counter can be lowered, or a lapboard can be provided for writing.

All persons with disabilities, (for example, wheelchair users, those with other mobility challenges, and those with low vision) should enjoy convenient entry to and use of all court facilities and services. A general rule to apply in determining whether a space needs to be accessible is that a person with a mobility disability should be able to enter and reach every space made available to other court users.

For additional information:

Americans with Disabilities Act

<http://www.ada.gov/>

2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design

http://www.ada.gov/2010ADASTandards_index.htm

U.S. Access Board

<http://www.access-board.gov/>

Magisterial District Judges should be mindful that, pursuant to Rules of Judicial Administration 250-252, their judicial districts have promulgated policies under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (see Appendix AI). Accordingly, each judicial district has appointed an ADA coordinator for the purpose of receiving and granting requests for reasonable accommodation by court users. The ADA (Title II) policy for each judicial district is available on its court website or the court page on the county website. Forms for requesting reasonable accommodations and for grieving the failure to provide reasonable accommodations are available online and in the judicial districts.

Court Emergencies Guide

Ensuring the safety of court personnel, court users and the public during an emergency starts with the development of an emergency action plan. Equally important is keeping the plan current, communicating it to facility occupants, and training occupants on emergency response procedures.

The following sections provide general guidance on typical emergencies.

REPORTING AN EMERGENCY

- Call the emergency phone number applicable for your court facility.
- The phone number is _____.

EVACUATION

- Evacuation may be necessary during certain types of emergencies, or when ordered by the county, court officials, office supervisor or law enforcement.
- Know your evacuation route.
- In case of an evacuation, the assembly point is _____.

EMERGENCY LOCKDOWN PROCEDURES

- Go to nearest room or office.
- Close and lock the doors.
- Cover the door windows.
- Stay calm and quiet (turn off or silence cell phones).
- Do not answer the door.
- If the situation permits and you can safely do so, call the emergency phone number applicable for your court facility.
- The phone number is _____.
- Provide the following information to the operator:
 - Your name.
 - Location of incident and your exact location.
 - Number of assailants if known.
 - Physical description/identification of assailants.
 - Number of persons involved and/or injuries.
- Wait for first responders to assist and direct you out of the facility.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY

- Know the location of first aid kits and Automated External Defibrillator (AED).
- The location of the first aid kit is _____.
- The location of the Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is _____.
- Call the emergency phone number applicable for your facility.
- The phone number is _____.
- Provide the following information to the operator:
 - Nature of medical emergency.
 - The *specific* location of the emergency (address, building, room number).
 - Your name and the phone number from which you are calling.
 - Keep the line open. DO NOT HANG-UP!
- Do not move a victim unless absolutely necessary.
- If applicable for your court facility, call the following personnel trained in CPR and First Aid to provide the required assistance prior to the arrival of professional medical help:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

FIRE EMERGENCY

When fire is discovered:

- Remain calm.
- Activate the nearest fire alarm.
- Call the emergency phone number applicable for your court facility.
- The phone number is _____.
- Notify the local fire department by calling _____.

Upon being notified about the fire emergency, occupants must:

- Leave the building using the designated evacuation routes.
 - Take jackets or clothing necessary for protection from the weather.
 - Close windows and doors, but **do not** lock doors.
 - Leave office lights on.
 - If you are away from the office or courtroom when the alarm sounds, exit the facility and proceed to the designated assembly point.
- Assemble in the designated area (specify locations) _____.

- Remain outside until the competent authority (designated official or designee) provides further instruction or announces that it is safe to re-enter the facility.
- If you become trapped due to smoke, heat, flame or another hazard:
 - Leave office/courtroom door closed.
 - Call the emergency phone number applicable for your court facility.
 - The phone number is _____.
 - Provide specific detail about your exact location.
 - Hang an article of clothing, large enough for first responders to see, in or out of the window if possible.
 - Stay close to the floor.

POWER LOSS

During a power loss, certain measures should be taken:

- Remain calm.
- Call the emergency phone number applicable for your court facility.
- The phone number is _____.
- Unnecessary electrical equipment and appliances should be turned off in the event that power restoration would surge and cause damage to electronics.
- Know where the emergency flashlights are located.
- If in an unlit area, proceed cautiously to an area that has emergency lighting.
- If you are in an elevator, remain calm. Use the elevator phone or your cell phone to request assistance.
- If the facility must be evacuated, follow the facility's evacuation procedures.

BOMB THREATS

Most bomb threats are transmitted via the telephone. However, they are also conveyed via mail, electronically (email), or in person.

Regardless of how the threat is made, the following steps should be followed:

- Remain calm, listen carefully, be polite and show interest.
- Call the emergency phone number applicable for your court facility.
- The phone number is _____.

TELEPHONE BOMB THREAT CHECKLIST					
Your Name:		Date: ___/___/20___		Time: ___:___ AM/PM	
Caller's Identity Gender:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female		Notes:	
Approximate Age:	<input type="checkbox"/> Adult	<input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile			
Method of Transmission:	<input type="checkbox"/> Phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Email			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mail	<input type="checkbox"/> In person			
Voice Characteristic		Speech		Language	
<input type="checkbox"/> Loud	<input type="checkbox"/> Soft	<input type="checkbox"/> Fast	<input type="checkbox"/> Slow	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good
<input type="checkbox"/> High Pitch	<input type="checkbox"/> Deep	<input type="checkbox"/> Distinct	<input type="checkbox"/> Distorted	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor
<input type="checkbox"/> Raspy	<input type="checkbox"/> Pleasant	<input type="checkbox"/> Stutter	<input type="checkbox"/> Nasal	<input type="checkbox"/> Foul	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Intoxicated	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Slurred	<input type="checkbox"/> Other		
Accent		Manner		Background Noises	
<input type="checkbox"/> Local	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Local	<input type="checkbox"/> Calm	<input type="checkbox"/> Irrational	<input type="checkbox"/> Factory	<input type="checkbox"/> Animals
<input type="checkbox"/> Foreign	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Rational	<input type="checkbox"/> Incoherent	<input type="checkbox"/> Machines	<input type="checkbox"/> Quiet
<input type="checkbox"/> Race		<input type="checkbox"/> Deliberate	<input type="checkbox"/> Emotional	<input type="checkbox"/> Music	<input type="checkbox"/> Voices
		<input type="checkbox"/> Righteous	<input type="checkbox"/> Laughing	<input type="checkbox"/> Office	<input type="checkbox"/> Airplanes
		<input type="checkbox"/> Angry		<input type="checkbox"/> Traffic	<input type="checkbox"/> Party
				<input type="checkbox"/> Trains	

- PRETEND DIFFICULTY HEARING
- KEEP CALLER TALKING
- IF CALLER SEEMS AGREEABLE TO FURTHER CONVERSATION, ASK QUESTIONS:

QUESTIONS TO ASK CALLER		
When will it go off?	Certain Hour:	Time Remaining:
Where is it located?	Building:	Area:
What kind of bomb?		
What kind of package?		
How do you know so much about the bomb?		

SEVERE WEATHER

Tornado/Hurricane

- When a warning is issued by sirens or other means, seek inside shelter:
 - Small interior rooms on the lowest floor and without windows;
 - Hallways on the lowest floor away from doors and windows; or
 - Rooms constructed with reinforced concrete, brick or block with no windows.
- Stay away from outside walls and windows.
- Use arms to protect head and neck.
- Remain sheltered until the tornado or hurricane threat is announced to be over.

Blizzard (if indoors)

- Stay calm and await instructions from the facility's emergency coordinator or designee.
- Listen for closing and other information via radio and TV.
- Stay indoors.
- If there is no heat:
 - Close off unneeded rooms or areas;
 - Stuff towels or rags in the cracks and under doors; and
 - Cover windows at night.
- Eat and drink. Food provides the body with energy and heat. Fluids prevent dehydration.
- Wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing, if available.

Earthquake

- Stay calm and await instructions from the facility's emergency coordinator or designee.
- If indoors: drop, cover and hold.
- Protect yourself from falling objects such as light fixtures, books and shelves.
- Stay away from windows and do not stand in doorways.
- If possible, get under a desk or table.
- During the shaking, do not run for exits or attempt to leave the facility.
- Do not use elevators.
- If outside: move away from structures, power lines or other hazards.
- Assist people with disabilities in finding a safe place.
- Evacuate as instructed by the emergency coordinator, law enforcement or facilities management.

When shaking stops:

- Check for injuries to people in your area.
- Do not attempt to move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger.
- Check area for safety hazards such as facility damage, fire, or gas leaks.
- Evacuate following facility evacuation procedures.
- Call the court emergency number to report any serious emergency.
- The phone number is _____.

ACTIVE SHOOTER/LIFE THREATENING WEAPONS PROCEDURES

If you are involved in a situation where someone has entered the area and started shooting or otherwise started harming people, the following instructions should be followed:

Evacuate

- If possible, evacuate the facility immediately.
- Notify anyone you may encounter to exit the facility immediately.
- When safe to do so, call the emergency phone number applicable for your court facility.
- The phone number is _____.
- Provide the following information to the operator:
 - Your name.
 - Location of incident and your exact location.
 - Number of shooters (if known).
 - Identification of shooters (if known).
 - Number of persons involved and/or injuries.

Hide

- If exiting the building is not possible, the following lock down instructions should be followed:

Emergency Lockdown Procedures:

- Go to nearest room or office.
- Close and lock the doors.
- Cover the door windows.
- Stay calm and quiet and act as if no one is in the room (turn off or silence cell phones).
- Do not answer the door.

- If the situation permits and you can safely do so, call the emergency phone number applicable for your court facility.
- The phone number is _____.
- Provide the following information to the operator:
 - Your name.
 - Location of the incident and your exact location.
 - Number of shooters/assailants.
 - Physical description/identification of shooters/assailants.
 - Number of persons involved and/or injuries.
- Wait for first responders to assist you out of the facility.

Disrupt/Incapacitate the Violent Intruder

- Only as a last resort if evacuation and lockdown (hide out) are not possible, and only when your life is in imminent danger, should you attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the shooter by acting as aggressively as possible against him/her (e.g. throwing items at the shooter, improvise weapons to confuse the shooter, yell). At all times, be steadfast in your commitment to your disruptive actions.

HOSTAGE SITUATION PROCEDURES

If you hear or see a hostage situation:

- Immediately remove yourself from any danger. When safe to do so, call the emergency phone number applicable for your court facility.
- The phone number is _____.

Provide the following information:

- Your name.
- The location of the incident and your exact location.
- Number of hostage takers.
- Physical description/identification of hostage takers.
- Any weapons the hostage takers may have.

If taken hostage:

- Remain calm, be polite and cooperate with your captors.
- Do not attempt escape unless there is an extremely good chance of survival.
- It is safer to be submissive and obey your captors.
- Do not complain, avoid being belligerent, and comply with all orders and instructions.

- Do not draw attention to yourself with sudden body movements, statements, comments, or hostile looks.
- Observe the captors and try to memorize their physical traits, voice patterns, clothing, and other details that can help provide a description later.

In a rescue situation:

- Do not run.
- Drop to the floor and remain still. If that is not possible, cross your arms, bow your head and stand still. Make no sudden moves that a tense rescuer may interpret as hostile or threatening.
- Wait for instructions and obey all instructions that are given.
- Do not be upset, resist, or argue if a rescuer isn't sure whether you are a captor or a hostage.
- If you are handcuffed and searched, do not resist. Wait for the confusion to clear.

SUSPICIOUS LETTERS/PACKAGES PROCEDURES

Letters and Packages

- If there is a known medical emergency or chemical reaction with the letter or package, call the emergency phone number applicable for your court facility.
- The phone number is _____.
- Do not open the suspicious letter/package.
- Treat the letter/package as suspect.
- Isolate and contain the letter/package. Do not handle it!
- Common features of suspicious letters and packages include:
 - Liquid leaking from package.
 - Excessive postage/hand applied postage.
 - No return address.
 - Addressed to a position, not a person.
 - Hand written label or a poorly typed address.
 - Misspelling of common words.
 - Restrictive markings such as "confidential," "personal," etc.
 - Excessive weight and/or feel of powdery or foreign substance.
 - Foreign postmark and /or writing.

- For a Bomb - evacuate the area immediately.
- Call the emergency phone number applicable for your court facility.
- The phone number is _____.

Chemical, Biological or Radiological Contaminates

- Isolate it and contain - do not handle.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water.
- Call the emergency phone number applicable for your court facility.
- The phone number is _____.

Air Contamination

- Turn off fans or ventilation units and shut down the air handling systems in the building, if possible.
- Leave the area immediately and close the door or section off the area to prevent others from entering.
- Call the emergency phone number applicable for your court facility.
- The phone number is _____.
- If possible, list all people who were in the room or area. Provide a list to the authorities for any needed medical advice and to law enforcement for follow-up.

Placed Device

- Do not disturb the device.
- Evacuate immediately.
- Call the emergency phone number applicable for your court facility.
- The phone number is _____.

A4 HIGH PROFILE/HIGH RISK CASES

Certain cases will need to be identified as High-Profile/High Risk cases. These cases must have a security plan developed to deal with actions that may threaten the safety and security of participants and staff. Below is a list of such cases.

	Civil	Criminal
	Contested small claims	Assaults
Moderate	Child Abuse and Neglect	Extortion
	Civil Right Violations	Terroristic Threats
	Deportation	Stalking
	Foreclosures	Firearms Violations
	Seizures, Forfeiture and Penalties	Obstructions of Justice
	Tax Violations	Organized Crime
	High Profile/Media intensified	Armed Robberies
	Related Threat Analysis & Assessment	Sex offenses
		High Profile/Media Intensified
		Anti-Government
High		Related Threat Analysis and Assessment
	Protection from Abuse	Mass/Serial Violent or Sex Offenses
	Child Custody	Escape
	Associated Violent Criminal History	Homicide
	Related Threat Analysis	Kidnapping
		Bomb Attacks
		Narcotics Trafficking
		Related Threat Analysis & Assessment
		Domestic Violence

For these cases, the following security options or combinations of options should be considered:

- Utilize video conferencing in conjunction with the applicable rules.
- Move the proceeding to the courthouse.
- Law enforcement should utilize portable magnetometers or hand wands.
- Use police officers or other law enforcement as security.