

**MEDIA PLAN AND
RULES REGARDING RECORDING OR BROADCASTING BY ANY PERSON, COURT
SPECTATOR, COURT PARTICIPANT, MEDIA OR ENTITY**

**253RD JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
LIBERTY COUNTY, TEXAS**

The following rules are in effect for the broadcasting, televising, photographing and recording of any courtroom activity related to the 253rd Judicial District Court, Liberty County, Texas.

These rules contain safeguards to ensure that media coverage and recording shall not detract from the dignity of the court proceedings or otherwise interfere with the achievement of a fair and impartial court proceeding.

1. Definitions

- 1.1 "*Media*" means any person or organization engaging in news gathering or reporting and includes any newspaper, radio or television station or network, news service, magazine, trade paper, in-house publication, professional journal, or other news reporting or news gathering agency, whether the information is transmitted or disseminated by broadcasting, cable, satellite, internet, or other means.
- 1.2 "*Broadcasting*" means disseminating or transmitting to the public through newspapers, television, radio, internet, artificial intelligence or other means.
- 1.3 "*Recording*" means any photographing, audio recording, or video recording by any means.
- 1.4 "*Proceeding*" means any court hearing, including but not limited to pretrial motions and the trial of the case.

2. Discretion of Judge

- 2.1 Recording of any court proceeding is **prohibited** unless authorized in writing by the Judge of the 253rd Judicial District Court.
- 2.2 The Judge reserves the right to limit, allow, and/or deny recording of any court proceeding.
- 2.3 The Judge has discretionary power to forbid recording whenever that recording may have a deleterious effect on the paramount right of the defendant to a fair trial.
- 2.4 The Judge has sole and primary discretion to exclude and/or specify the type of recording of certain witnesses, including but not limited to the victims of sex crimes and their families, police informants, undercover agents, relocated witnesses, and juveniles.
- 2.5 The Judge has the discretion to limit or to terminate the recording at any time during the proceedings if the Court deems such is necessary and that it is in the interest of justice to protect the rights of the parties, witnesses, or the dignity of the Court, or to assure the orderly conduct of the proceedings, or for any other reason considered necessary or appropriate by the Court.

3. Restrictions

- 3.1 Except as permitted by the trial court, the recording or broadcasting of court proceedings by any person, spectator, or entity, including but not limited to the media, is **prohibited**. Any recordings **illegally or improperly made in accordance with this Media Plan and Rules Regarding**

Recording or Broadcasting by any Person, Court Spectator, Court Participant, Media or Entity is a violation of this Local Rule. Knowing or intentional violation of these rules may be punished by contempt or other sanction authorized by law or by rules of procedure as the Judge may deem appropriate.

- 3.2 Recording or broadcasting of proceedings held in chambers, proceedings closed to the public, jury selection, and jury deliberation is **prohibited**.
- 3.3 Recording or broadcasting of conferences between an attorney and client, witness or aide or between attorneys is **prohibited**.
- 3.4 Recording or broadcasting of the jury or any member of the jury in or outside of the courtroom is **prohibited**.
- 3.5 Recording or broadcasting of potential victims or witnesses inside the courtroom building is **prohibited**.
- 3.6 Recording or broadcasting of conferences between members of the court or between counsel and the court is **prohibited**.
- 3.7 Recording, broadcasting, or disseminating any part thereof of any court proceeding by any person or spectator is **prohibited**.
- 3.8 The audible use of cell phones in the courtroom is **prohibited**.
- 3.9 Cell phone cameras in the courtroom are **prohibited**.
- 3.10 Interviews/Press Conferences, etc., are **prohibited** in the courtroom.
- 3.11 Except as permitted by the trial court, recording or broadcasting inside the courtroom of the 253rd Judicial District Court is **prohibited**.
- 3.12 If another courtroom is utilized for any court proceeding, this Media Plan and Rules Regarding Recording or Broadcasting by any Person, Court Spectator, Court Participant, Media or Entity for the 253rd Judicial District Court shall be followed, along with any modifications necessary.
- 3.13 For security reasons, **DO NOT** approach any Judge, court staff, or trial participants inside the courthouse.

4. Media Coverage

- 4.1 **Request Permission.** Only media may request permission to record or broadcast court proceedings.
- 4.2 **Notice.** The media shall notify the Court Coordinator of the 253rd Judicial District Court¹ in writing of their desire to record and/or broadcast a proceeding and request permission for such coverage at least seventy-two (72) hours in advance of any coverage. The notice shall include any specific requests, such as broadcasting, photographing, audio recording, or video recording by **any** means and the location(s) requested, i.e., inside the courtroom and/or inside the courthouse. The notice shall be signed by an agent of each specific media agency that intends to cover a proceeding or a trial, and the notice shall contain an acknowledgement that such media agency and agent has received a copy of this Media Plan and Rules Regarding Recording or Broadcasting by any Person, Court Spectator, Court Participant, Media or Entity and that this Media Plan and Rules Regarding Recording or

¹ Leticia Manning – leticia.manning@co.liberty.tx.us

Broadcasting by any Person, Court Spectator, Court Participant, Media or Entity is binding upon said media agency and agent. Upon written notice of a request for broadcast or recording of proceedings and prior to the commencement of the proceedings, the Court shall consider the request and either grant or deny the request. Any media agency or agent who intends to disseminate any footage of court proceedings shall guarantee that the restrictions imposed by Media Plan and Rules Regarding Recording or Broadcasting by any Person, Court Spectator, Court Participant, Media or Entity or the Court are adhered to.

- 4.2.1 **Pooling.** If more than one member of the media requests to cover a proceeding under 4.3.2, they shall make pool arrangements. Any pooling arrangements necessary shall be the sole responsibility of the media and must be concluded prior to coverage without calling upon the Court to mediate any dispute regarding appropriate media and personnel.
- 4.3 **Equipment and personnel.** The Court may require the media to demonstrate that their proposed equipment complies with these rules and may exclude from the courtroom any media who fails to comply with these rules.
 - 4.3.1 All equipment shall be operated from a point specifically designated by the Court to permit reasonable coverage without disruption to the proceedings.
 - 4.3.2 One portable television camera operated by not more than one camera person may be permitted. Cameras shall be quiet and shall be placed and operated as unobtrusively as possible within the designated courtroom location approved by the Court.
 - 4.3.3 Only natural lighting shall be used.
 - 4.3.4 Signal lights or devices which show when equipment is operating shall not be visible. Moving lights, flash attachments, or sudden lighting changes shall not be used.
 - 4.3.5 Operators shall not move equipment while the court is in session, or otherwise cause a distraction. All equipment shall be in place at least thirty (30) minutes in advance of the commencement of the proceeding that is the subject of the coverage.
 - 4.3.6 The non-audible use of laptops or similar communication devices (such as an iPad) in the courtroom is permitted for notetaking by the media, so long as those devices are **NOT** used for recording the audio or video of the proceedings and do **NOT** distract the court proceedings.

5. Decorum

- 5.1 All media and spectators shall avoid activity which might distract participants or impair the dignity of the proceedings; shall observe the customs of the Court; shall conduct themselves in keeping the Court decorum; and shall not dress in a manner which sets them apart unduly from the participants in the proceedings.
- 5.2 All media and spectators are asked to remain seated in the courtroom and avoid unnecessary entrance/exit during proceedings.
- 5.3 **AVOID** all areas where jurors may be located when outside of court proceedings, i.e., smoking areas, public restrooms.

6. Trial Transcripts

All requests for transcripts of court proceedings must be made in writing to the Official Court Reporter of the 253rd Judicial District Court.²

Signed on this 18th day of August, 2025, and effective upon publication on the Office of Court Administration's Local Rules, Forms, and Standing Orders website.


HONORABLE CHAP B. CAIN, III
JUDGE, 253RD JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
LIBERTY COUNTY, TEXAS

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at 10:50 o'clock A M
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DELIA SELLERS
Clerk, District Court, Liberty, TX
BY Michael Willey DEPUTY

² Jo Anne Horn Leger – reporter.253rd@co.liberty.tx.us