

# If Walls Could Talk: *Can Better Court Signs Help Build Public Trust?*

**“Truth is powerful  
and it prevails.”**  
— SOJOURNER TRUTH

- Please
-  No Phones
  -  No Recording Devices
  -  No Food / Beverages
  -  No Smoking
  -  No Talking
  -  No Hats

 Center  
for  
Court  
Innovation



# Acknowledgements

This project, *Face of Justice: Building Trust and Confidence through Model Court Websites and Signage*, was developed under a grant from the State Justice Institute. Points of view expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the State Justice Institute.

A complementary product was made under this award: “Building Public Trust and Confidence through Model Court Websites.”

This project would not be possible without the court leaders who volunteered their time and energy to providing feedback on proposed designs. We thank Samiha Meah for her design edits and Zago for the original designs. The Center also acknowledges the New York State Court System and the New York City Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice for being an initial testing ground for courthouse signage improvements over the past several years and the home to the sample signage showcased in this guide.

This toolkit was developed by:

*Emily LaGratta & Alejandra Garcia*  
Center for Court Innovation

*Mark Goodner & Hope Lochridge*  
Texas Municipal Courts Education Center

2019

The Center for Court Innovation and Texas Municipal Courts Education Center retain ownership of the toolkit and copyright of pre-existing materials used in the toolkit. The toolkit may be reprinted or excerpted with attribution as follows: “Reprinted from *Building Public Trust and Confidence through Model Court Websites and Signage*, a project developed by the Center for Court Innovation and the Texas Municipal Courts Education Center under a grant from the State Justice Institute.”

# Texas Municipal Courts Face of Justice

## Building Trust and Confidence Through Model Court Signage

### Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Making a Case for Better Signage .....	4
How to Use This Toolkit .....	6
Planning a Signage Project.....	6
1. Get user feedback .....	6
2. Engage system stakeholders .....	7
3. Measure the impact.....	7
4. Leverage this work to enhance other trust-building efforts.....	7
Design & Communications Basics .....	8
Improving Understanding .....	10
Demonstrating Respect.....	14
Conveying Neutral Decision-making.....	17
Inviting Voice.....	19
Showcase of Promising Examples .....	20
Resources .....	23
Appendix: Signage templates .....	24

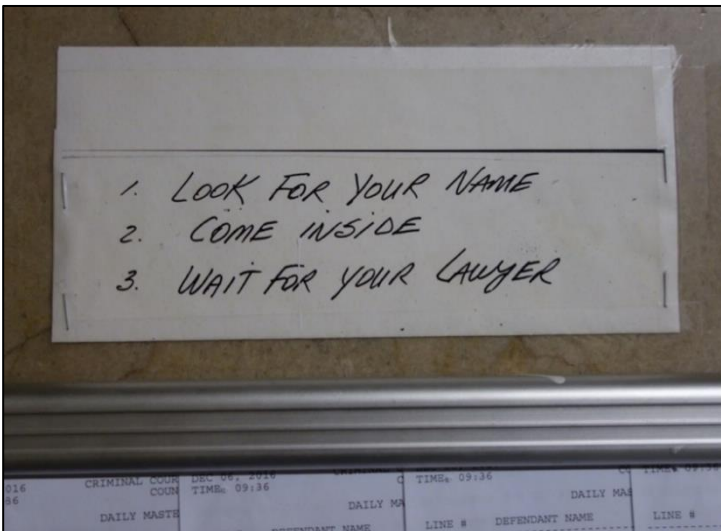
# Making a Case for Better Court Signage

The physical spaces of our country’s courts are varied. Their size, layout, infrastructure, functionality, and décor are as diverse as the communities they serve. Despite this variation, there are common concerns that unite almost all courts. Namely, all courthouses benefit from messaging to those who enter through their doors. Priorities like security and wayfinding are common to both a small rural courthouse in Texas or a large urban courthouse in New York.

Rarely, however, do the courthouse walls – including its signage – support court professionals in conveying to court users the information they need in the most effective and fair means possible. This is certainly not because those court professionals do not care about what the public thinks, but rather that design, aesthetics, and professionalism have often been relegated to something akin to luxury in a system that is constantly asked to do more with less.

Throughout this section are examples of courthouse signage that the Center for Court Innovation staff has collected as part of its work on this topic. In many ways, these examples are not anomalous. Almost every courthouse has its own versions of signs that were created by busy, well-meaning professionals. And yet the messages that these signs convey could be interpreted reasonably by the public as disrespectful, disorganized, confusing, or worse. In short, the signs work against perceptions of trust and confidence.

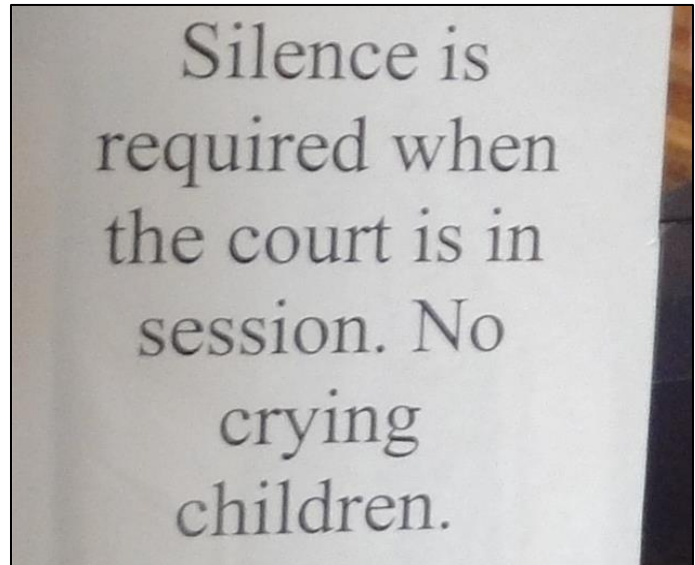
Most of these signs were created by well-intentioned court professionals who are deeply concerned with fairness and the legitimacy of the court. But it is not hard to imagine how the message that court users receive is one of disrespect and lack of fair process. Word choice and tone, format, and general readability all influence how that message is heard.





So, what if signs and the other messages our courthouse walls send could deliver a more targeted, research-informed set of messages – namely, ones of respect, dignity, voice, and neutrality? These are the key components of a concept called procedural justice that helps build trust between courts and the public.

If procedural justice is prioritized, how might court users' perceptions of the process be enhanced by these seemingly superficial changes? Might these changes even improve court staff morale and their sense of professionalism? This project documents an exploration of these questions.



## How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit was developed to help judges and other criminal court practitioners improve courthouse signage. The end goal is to enhance court users' perceptions of fairness and build (or rebuild) trust and confidence in the justice system. By showing examples of model signage implemented in real courthouses around the country, the hope is that other jurisdictions will be inspired to consider how their built environment can be examined and improved. Some of the samples included are court-specific – such as a building directory – so they do not have utility as an off-the-shelf resource, but rather are intended to give ideas for future, localized designs. But for other signs, such as those that convey typical courtroom rules or notices about court procedures, the samples provided may have direct applicability. As such, high resolution images of those are provided in Appendix A and are available for use and reproduction.

Of course, this toolkit is not a substitute for professional design services. But it may be helpful as a complement when considering signage and other environmental improvements and starting a dialogue with design partners.

The core content of the toolkit is organized by each element of procedural justice: understanding, respect, voice, and neutrality. While messages can certainly enhance more than one element, it is important to consider how signage improvements as a whole are working to improve all four elements. It is not enough to focus on improving understanding alone, for example. So while each individual sign need not incorporate all four elements, ensure that consistent messaging is delivered on all four points throughout the facility.

## Planning a Signage Project

Planning a signage project may not be like any other project the court has implemented. For one, it will need to involve virtually every entity that works in the courthouse, which may be a large and diverse group. It should also incorporate user feedback, as noted below, which may be an unfamiliar process to the court. These tips are outlined to support planning efforts.

### 1. Get user feedback

There is no substitute for direct user feedback about what it's like to visit a courthouse. As justice system professionals who come and go from a space daily, it is easy to forget how navigable and user-friendly the space is and what its limitations are. In fact, many professionals may never have used the public entrance to their courthouse due to the availability of a separate staff entrance. In any case, you'll want to involve the public in assessing needs of the current space and getting feedback on proposed designs.



## 2. Engage system stakeholders

As noted above, involving all stakeholders who are based in and utilize the courthouse is essential. Consider what processes you will use to consult them about the needs of the existing space, as well as to solicit feedback during the planning and design process. This might be achieved through one-on-one meetings with agency leadership or through mixed-level or mixed-agency focus groups or meetings.

Be sure to engage the court's certified interpreters to ensure consistency for any content provided in languages other than English. You might consider which one or two non-English languages are most commonly spoken in the courthouse (evidenced by interpreter requests) and translate all finalized English content at the end of the planning process. Note that any final adjustments to the English language content will obviously need final review and edits at the very end of the project as well.



## 3. Measure the impact

Consider how you will measure the impact of any changes. This could include a simple self-assessment among court personnel to gauge their satisfaction with the planning process and ultimate design. It is also a worthwhile investment to conduct a baseline and follow-up survey among court users to demonstrate any changes perceptions. A sample survey is provided as Appendix B, which can be tailored based on each court's signage improvements. For more

information about measuring perceptions of fairness and for a sample Self-Assessment highlighted above, visit [https://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/P\\_J\\_Evaluation.pdf](https://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/P_J_Evaluation.pdf).

CENTER  
FOR  
COURT  
INNOVATION

Measuring Perceptions of Fairness:  
An Evaluation Toolkit

### Self-Assessment of Court Practices

To be used with "INSTRUCTIONS: Self-Assessment of Court Practices"

The following statements measure the procedural justice concepts of understanding, voice, respect, neutrality, and helpfulness. Please rate the degree to which most court staff and court practices exhibit these characteristics.

**1. Ensuring Understanding**

Understanding Average: (add all scores)/4 =

	1-Not at all	2-Infrequently	3-Sometimes	4-Almost always
a. At the beginning of court sessions, the court's bench officers provide a summary of what will happen during the appearance.	1	2	3	4
b. At the end of court appearances, the court's bench officers verify that court users understand the court's decision and what is expected of them going forward.	1	2	3	4

## 4. Leverage this work to enhance other trust-building efforts

Signage improvements can be a meaningful way to spur discussions among court personnel about other strategies to improve fairness and build public trust. Anticipate that planning discussions will generate ideas during the design phase that will amount to improvements beyond signage: such as improved communication between stakeholders or announcements to or resources for the public that align with agreed-upon content for new signs. Catalog these ideas and consider relevant planning needs.

## Design & Communications Basics

Below are some basic design principles to keep in mind when beginning a project like this to improve or replace courthouse signage.

- **Font Size and Type:** There are hundreds of fonts to choose from if designing signs yourself. “Sans serif” fonts such as Arial and Helvetica are recommended for signs; avoid “Serif” fonts such as Times New Roman, Garamond, and Georgia. One font type should suffice, as opposed to utilizing multiple fonts on a given sign or throughout the facility. You can use size, bold, and italics to draw attention to different sections of each sign, as needed. Consider what fonts are already in use in the courthouse for signs that will remain and ensure that new signs’ fonts are compatible, if not identical, to what is already in place.
- **Capitalization:** All capital letters should be limited to signage titles and headings (*e.g.*, INFORMATION). Avoid all caps for longer phrases and sentences, as it is more difficult to read.
- **Color and Contrast:** Light text on a darker background or dark text on a lighter background maximizes readability. Consider existing colors in the courthouse so that new signs are consistent with the existing color palette. Consider whether different, complementary colors might be assigned for different types of signs: for example, beige for background for navigational signage and blue for informational signs.
- **Placement Level:** Most signs should be installed at eye level. Seek advice on building code requirements to ensure compliance with accessibility needs (*e.g.*, Braille). Also, consider how signage posted well above eye level may be utilized in congested areas or to identify key locations from a distance. Similarly, consider how signage or other indicators on the floor might be used to assist wayfinding.
- **Printing Materials and Installation:** Unlike many other public spaces, courthouses have unique security concerns that may affect choices in materials and formats used to display new signs. Frequent changes to signage content, as well as the durability needed given where the signs are installed, also affect materials used. Consider how a range of options may be appropriate within a given courthouse. For example, electronic signs or vinyl lettering applied directly to the walls may be a cost-effective option for signs that will need to change frequently. More permanent messages and signs in high-traffic areas may be more appropriate for a plastic, metal, or more durable materials.
- **Clean and De-clutter the Walls:** Start with a clean slate, and whenever possible, remove all existing signs. This will allow for deliberate decisions to be made about all signs that are posted, new and old. During this process, clean the walls – literally. This will help demonstrate respect, as well as improve the installation process.
- **Reading Level:** Signage content should be written at an appropriate reading level for the court’s audience – approximately 6th grade or below (this is the reading level of the average American). Use plain language in place of legal jargon or terms, and when possible limit the number of words per sentence, as well as the use of complex, multisyllabic words.



- **Language Access:** Whenever possible, provide signage content in other commonly spoken languages. It may be untenable to reach every possible audience through every sign, so consider the top handful of commonly spoken languages as a starting place. Consider how signage can direct individuals needing an interpreter to needed services. Any non-English content should be coordinated with the court's certified interpreters to ensure consistency.
- **Accessibility Considerations:** Consult with in-house or external experts as needed to ensure that signs are installed in ways that are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. This may include the addition of braille lettering on certain signs, as well as signage placement.

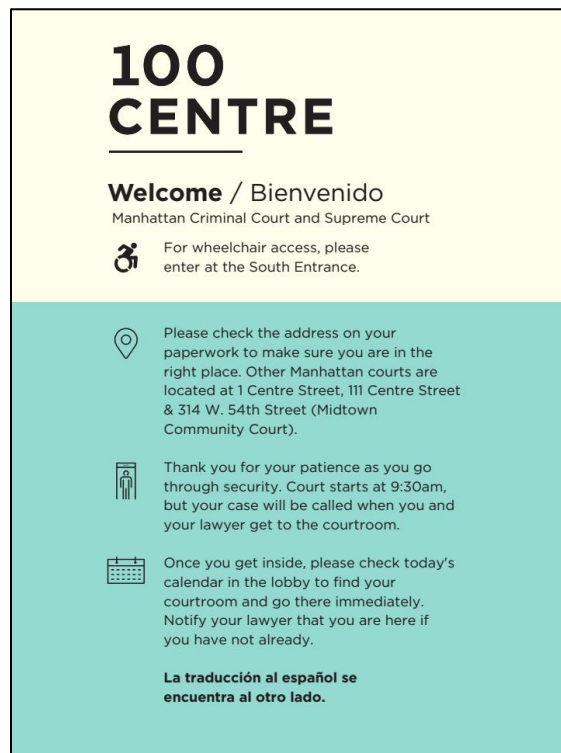
# Improving Understanding

## Security procedures & courthouse rules<sup>i</sup>

Security is paramount in criminal courthouses, underscoring the value of communicating security procedures clearly and respectfully and gaining voluntary compliance from court users.

In some courthouse, rules and procedures are not posted and may be enforced inconsistently by courthouse security staff. Gain consensus around key protocols and procedures and identify opportunities to post these rules in conspicuous places for those entering the courthouse. This may include sandwich boards or other stand-up signs outside the courthouse, as well as security or line barriers immediately inside the courthouse. Using materials that are heavy and sturdy may address concerns that the signs will either blow away or be relocated by unauthorized users.

Courthouse entrances are important locations to note disability access information, as well as to indicate information in the two or three most commonly used languages. Welcoming language can help to make a good first impression.



## Identifying key offices and resources

Consider whether the courthouse's most frequented locations – such as the clerk's office, courtrooms, or cashier – are easily identified upon entry to the building and outside of those rooms. Rules or instructions about accessing services, including hours of operation, can be posted on room identifiers as well. Particularly in areas where court users may need to wait in line, make use of this waiting time by posting information about what materials they will need to provide once they are able to meet with a staff member. These areas are prime locations to post other information, such as how to post bail or contact a lawyer referral service.

# 131

## Arraignment Information Office Oficina de Información del Juzgado de Control de Garantías

**Enter here for information about recent arrests.**  
Ingrese aquí para obtener información acerca de las personas recién detenidas.

9:00am – 1:00pm  
2:00pm – 1:00am

### Please have ready:

Por favor tenga a mano lo siguiente:



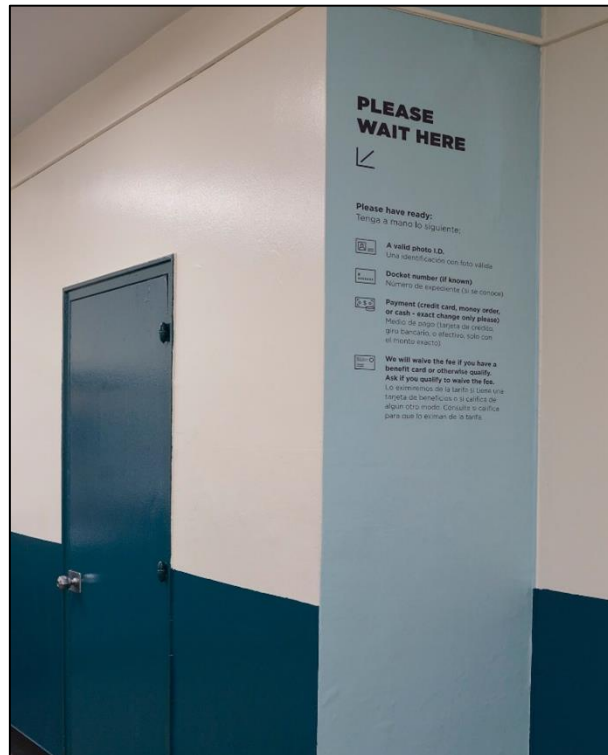
**Defendant's full name**  
Nombre completo del imputado



**Defendant's date of birth**  
Fecha de nacimiento del imputado



**Defendant's arrest number (if known)**  
Número de detención del imputado (si lo sabe)



# \$

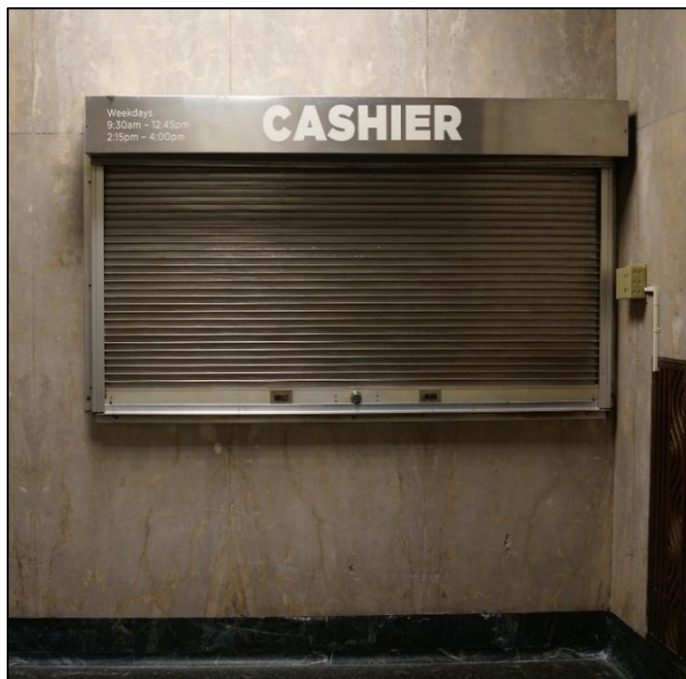
## Can You Make Bail Today? ¿Puede Pagar Hoy la Fianza?

**If you can pay bail today, tell the lawyer immediately. This may help the defendant be released earlier.**

Si puede pagar hoy la fianza, infórmeselo de inmediato al abogado. Esto podría ayudar a que el imputado reciba su libertad con más celeridad.

**Bail payments can be made at the Cashier (weekdays 9:30am – 12:45pm / 2:15pm – 4pm) or Arraignment Information Office in Room 131 (nights 5pm – 1am and weekends).**

Las fianzas se pueden pagar en la Caja (los días hábiles de 9:30 a.m. a 12:45 p.m. y de 2:15 p.m. a 4:00 p.m.) o en la Oficina de Información del Juzgado de Control de Garantías, Sala 131 (por las noches de 5:00 p.m. a 1:00 a.m., y los fines de semana).

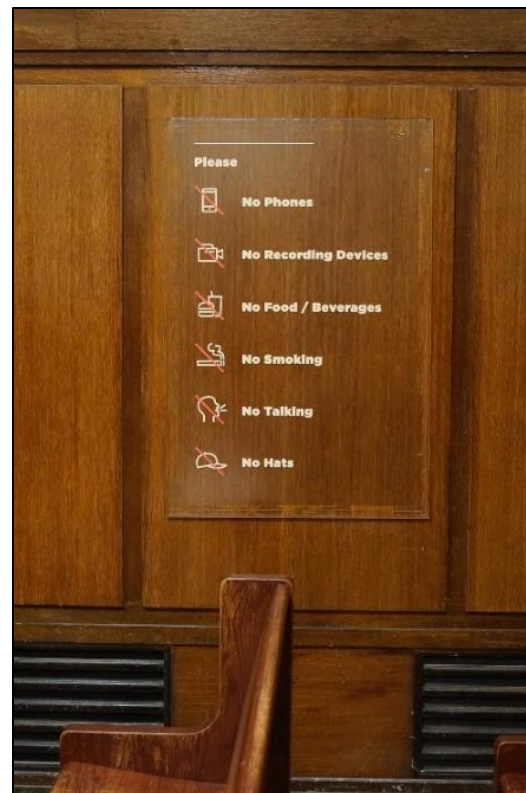


### Courtroom rules & decorum

Courtroom management and security is another top priority for many court professionals. How can signage support those priorities? Rules that will be enforced orally should be posted clearly to promote understanding and respect by providing advance notice of the rules and also to demonstrate neutrality that rules will be enforced without bias. Use images and languages other than English to communicate more effectively with court users who may not read English. If there are special procedures concerning signing in for a case or seating, post those rules conspicuously to avoid any appearance of bias.

**Please** | Se prohíbe lo siguiente:

-  **No Phones**  
Teléfonos
-  **No Recording Devices**  
Dispositivos de Grabación
-  **No Food / Beverages**  
Comida / Bebidas
-  **No Smoking**  
Fumar
-  **No Talking**  
Hablar
-  **No Hats**  
Gorros



**NO STANDING**  
**NO SE PARE**

**Please do not stand or talk in this area.**  
Por favor no se pare ni hable en esta área.

-   
-   



### *Providing legal information*

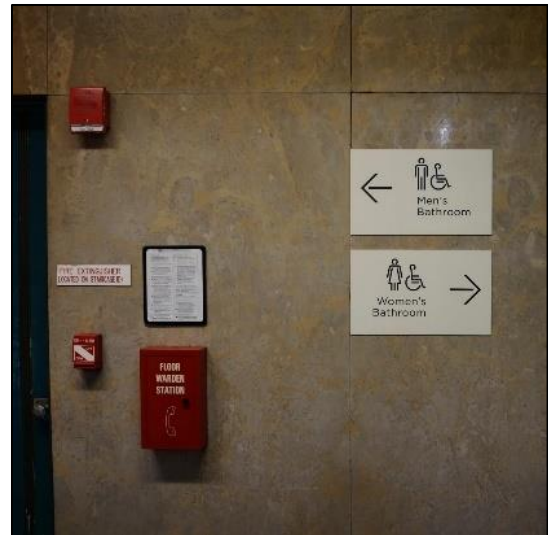
Many court users experience some amount of waiting when accessing the court. Consider how periods of waiting might be converted into opportunities to learn more about a relevant aspect of the court process. Here, the backs of courtroom benches were used for new signs providing legal information about who's who in the courtroom, typical fines and fees, and what to expect. Consider how signage might also clarify for court users – and support court professionals' efforts to deliver a similar message – the line between legal information and legal advice.



## Demonstrating Respect

### Addressing basic human needs

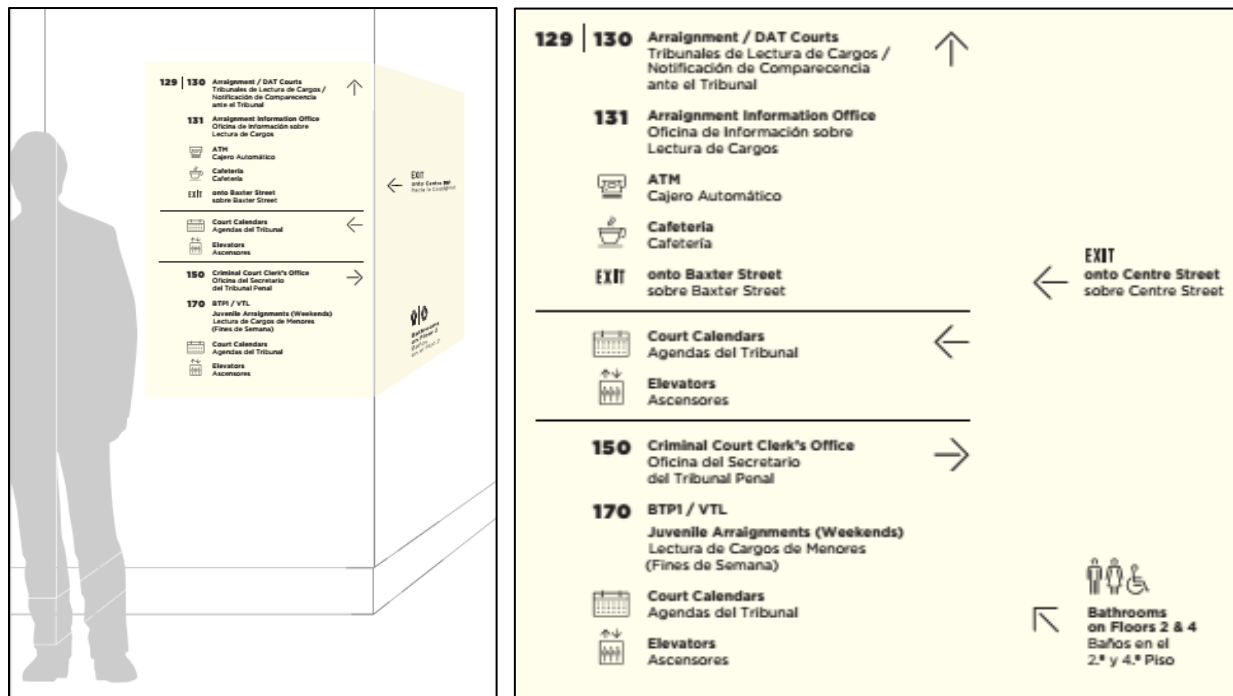
A fundamental aspect of demonstrating respect for court users is acknowledging their basic human needs while accessing any service – namely, access to clean and functioning bathrooms, and ideally, water fountains and food concessions. Directional signage should be clear and noted throughout the building.



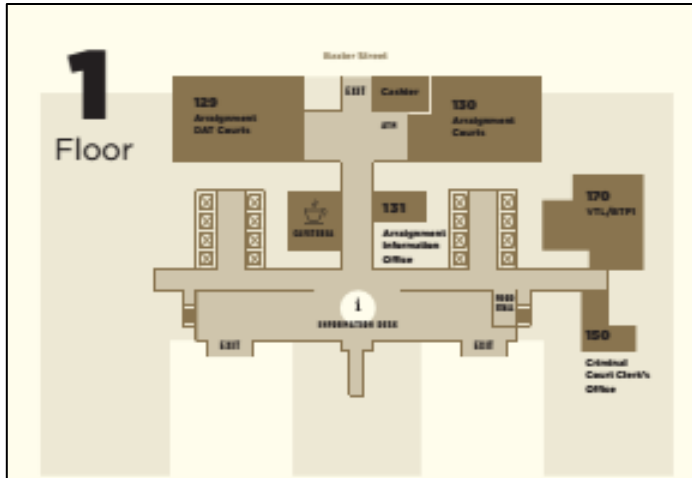
### Building navigation

Clear directories and directional information help to relieve anxiety that many court users have when coming to the courthouse. Efforts should be made to identify facility locations accurately and consistently, while also using plain language. For example, if the appearance docket is referred to by building staff as “AD-1,” consider how signage should reflect both the official room name and number, as well as this colloquial name. Directories and other signage should also guide users to bathrooms and other on-site services.

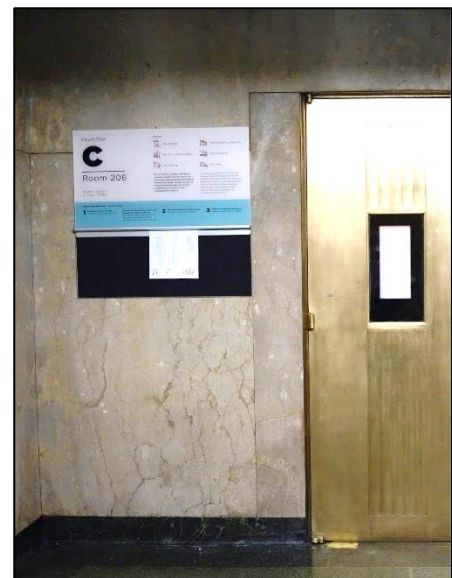
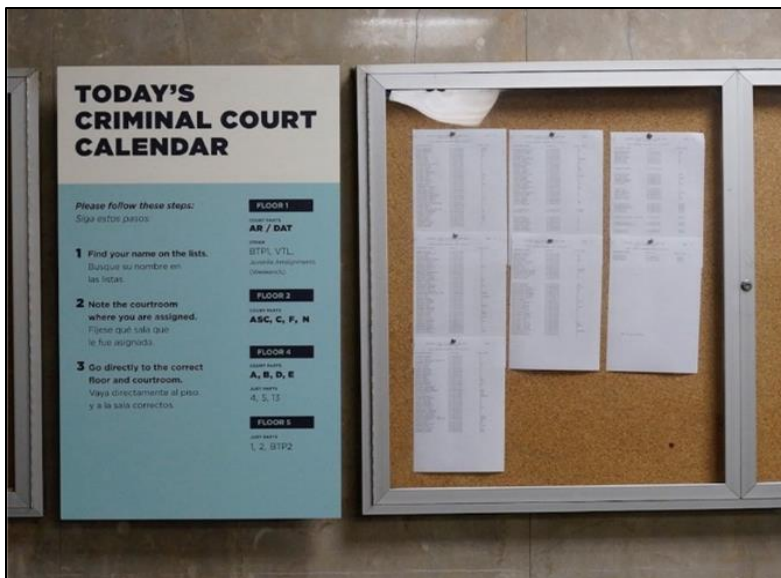
Directories should be easily visible upon entry to the courthouse and posted at eye level.



Maps and directional arrows can assist users with navigation. Use consistent color and font schemes for navigational signs throughout the building. An obvious but often forgotten resource is to post signs for all public exits to help court users efficiently leave when they are done with their court business.

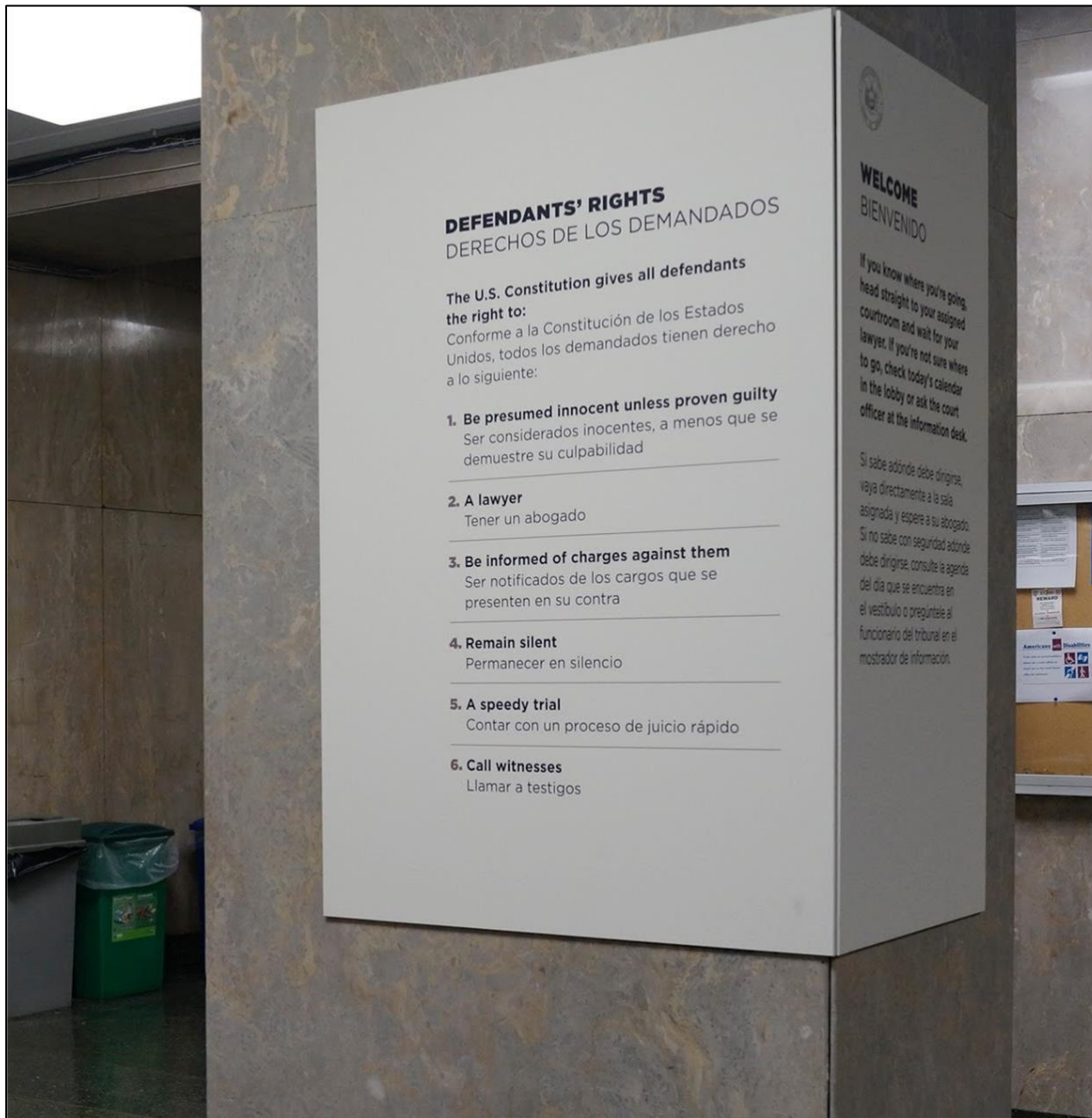


Part of the navigational assistance may include helping court users to find the courtroom in which their case will be heard, which may not be knowable in advance. Legends or instructions to help decipher court calendar print-outs may help users, even in the absence of an overhaul to the calendaring system. Similarly, orientation signage outside of a courtroom can affirm that users found the correct courtroom and alert them to any check-in procedures before entering.



## Legal rights

Signs can be used to convey more substantive messages of respect, also. Consider how the court can demonstrate its commitment to litigants' rights by posting these rights prominently and strategically within the courthouse. Consider how the messaging towards different users of the court – criminal defendants, witnesses, jurors, and other audiences – may need to be balanced and reconciled.





## Conveying Neutral Decision-making

### Language access

Many high-performing courts have figured out how to provide interpretation services for a multitude of languages, but it can be difficult to ensure that court users who need to access interpretation are aware and connected as early as possible. Consider prominent locations in the courthouse where instructions about accessing interpretation services can be posted in the most commonly requested languages.

For a Court Interpreter, please go to your courtroom and talk to your lawyer or a court officer. For other language assistance, go to Room 150.

Si desea recibir el servicio de un Intérprete del Tribunal, por favor dirijase al juzgado y dígaselo a su abogado o a un agente judicial. Dirijase a la Sala 150 para obtener asistencia lingüística adicional.

如您需要法庭翻譯，請前往法庭告知您的律師或庭警。如需其它方面的語言協助，請前往150室。

بالنسبة إلى مترجم الجلسة الفوري، يرجى الذهاب إلى قاعة المحكمة والتحدث مع محاميك أو أحد مسؤولي المحكمة. بالنسبة إلى المساعدة اللغوية الأخرى، اذهب إلى الغرفة 150.

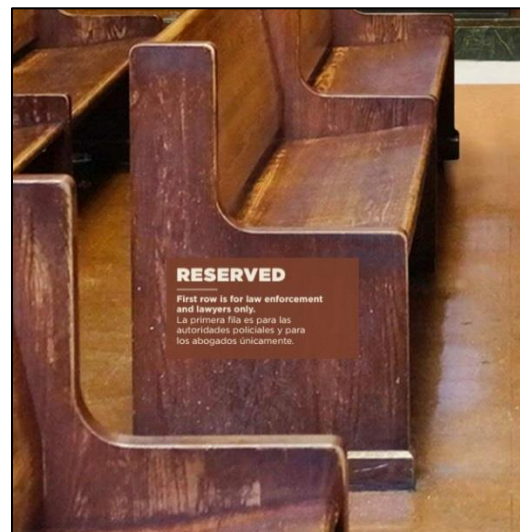
Если вам нужен устный переводчик в суде, пройдите в зал судебных заседаний и обратитесь к своему адвокату или служащему суда. Если вам нужны другие услуги перевода, пройдите в комнату 150.

Pour obtenir l'assistance d'un(e) interprète judiciaire, veuillez-vous rendre à la salle d'audience et vous adresser à votre avocat ou à un(e) auxiliaire de justice. Pour toute autre assistance linguistique, veuillez-vous rendre à la Salle 150.



### Designated seating

Some courtrooms have designated seating for attorneys or law enforcement. Ensure transparency and neutrality around these rules by posting information in those areas, in addition to oral enforcement that court staff may utilize. This signage may help avoid the perception that rules are applied inconsistently or with bias towards or against certain groups. Consider whether any explanation can be given for these rules to further promote neutrality.

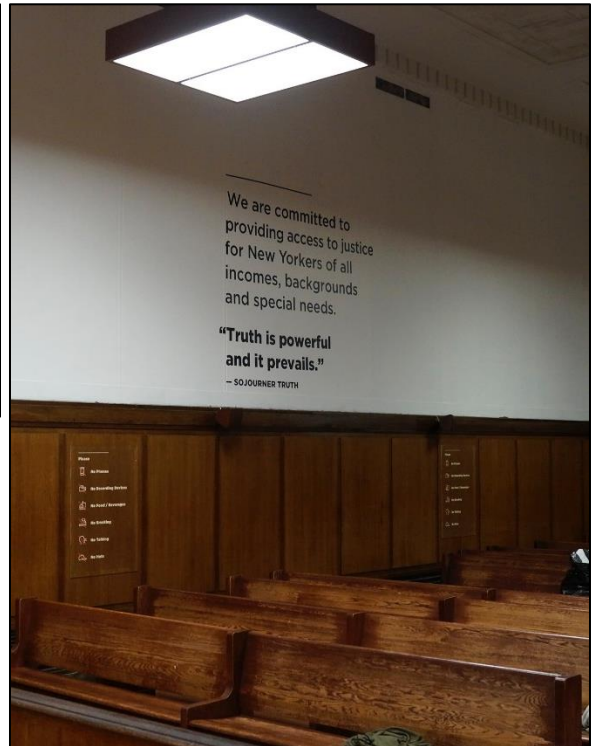


*Assert a commitment to serving all court users*

Perhaps it should go without saying, but it doesn't hurt to state explicitly the court's commitment to serving all members of the public. This statement may already exist as part of the court or jurisdiction's mission or vision statement.

Consider whether there is an inspirational quotation from a justice advocate that could be paired with the mission statement. These words can serve as a powerful complement to other imagery in the courthouse.

<p>_____</p> <p><b>We are committed to providing access to justice for New Yorkers of all incomes, backgrounds and special needs.</b></p> <p><b>“Truth is powerful and it prevails.”</b></p> <p>— SOJOURNER TRUTH</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Nos comprometemos a brindarles acceso a la justicia a todos los neoyorquinos cualesquiera sean sus ingresos, antecedentes y necesidades especiales.</p> <p><b>“La verdad es poderosa y prevalece”</b></p> <p>— SOJOURNER TRUTH</p> <p>_____</p> <p>我們致力於為各種收入、背景與特殊需求的全體紐約市民提供公平的審判。</p> <p><b>「強而有力的事實勝過一切。」</b></p> <p>— SOJOURNER TRUTH</p>
---	--

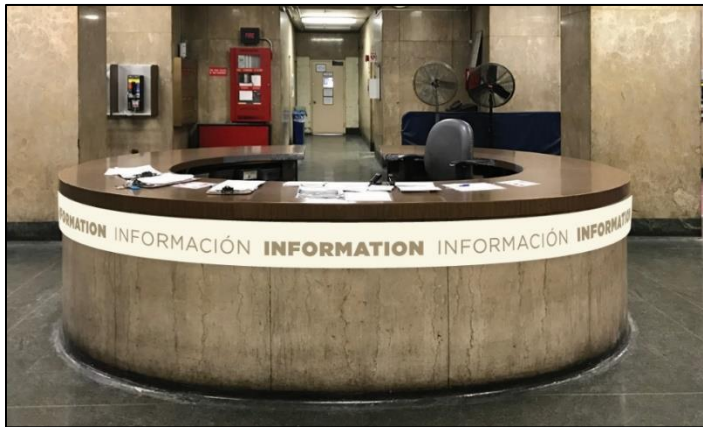


## Inviting Voice

Most courthouses are staffed by individuals with dozens of years of expertise and a genuine commitment to listen to and address court users' concerns and questions. Signage can help make clear that staff are available in this way and challenge any misperceptions that staff do not value court users' voice.

### *Information desks*

Some courthouses have an official information desk; others have an informal resource that serves the function of an information desk. In any case, consider whether a centralized area in the courthouse can be labeled clearly to invite questions and concerns of court users (e.g., "INFORMATION"). This could include adding language to security procedure signage to indicate that security officers are in a position to answer questions.



**Questions?  
Our court officers  
are happy to help.**

**For security screening, please  
remove your belt and all contents  
from your pockets (phones,  
wallets, coins).**

**Thank You.**

### *Connecting defendants to legal counsel and support*

Defense attorneys are often central to helping defendants have a voice in the criminal court process. For stages of the process where the right to a lawyer is guaranteed, post clear instructions about the value of legal representation and simple instructions about access. For defendants who are not represented, consider whether there are other staff or resources in the courthouse (e.g., a self-help center) to which they can be directed.

#### **Your Lawyer**

You have the right to a lawyer. If you already have a lawyer, go in the hallway and call or text them to tell them you are here. This may help your case to be heard sooner.

It is important to discuss the details of your case with your lawyer. Your lawyer will be with you when you see the judge.

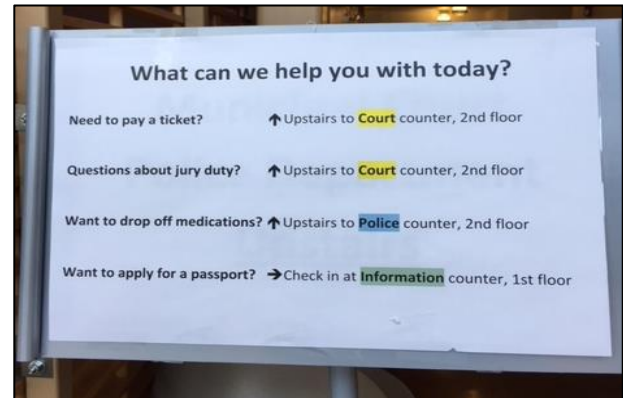
#### **Questions?**

If you have a question, ask your lawyer or wait for a break and ask a court officer.

## Showcase of Promising Examples

There are countless court leaders around the U.S. committed to improving court users' perceptions of fairness, including through improvements to the courthouse environment and its signage. Below is a sampling of images from these courts that have crossed paths with the Center for Court Innovation. To contribute other promising examples, please forward photos and descriptions to [info@courtinnovation.org](mailto:info@courtinnovation.org).

- Signs that improve wayfinding



- Signs that use images and logos to convey information





- Signs (including videos) that invite voice by conveying personable and approachable court leadership



- Signs that indicate court updates



- Signs that assert the court's commitment to fairness



**WELCOME TO THURSTON COUNTY  
FAMILY AND JUVENILE COURT**

**We will be happy to help you if we can. As we must be fair to everyone, we are allowed to help you only in certain ways.**

**We can help you:**

- arrange an interpreter;
- find out where you need to go;
- find court forms and self-help resources;
- give copies of paperwork that you filed to a judge;
- make a Disability Accommodation Request;
- find resources about lawyers or legal aid; and
- understand how our court works.

**Please understand, we cannot:**

- give personal opinions about cases;
- research the law for you;
- pass on messages to a judge;
- provide confidential information;
- talk to the judge for you or let you talk to the judge outside of court;
- tell you which lawyer we think is best;
- tell you what words to use in your court paper or whether they are correct;
- tell you whether or not you should bring your case to court; or
- tell you what to say in court.



## Additional Resources

- “Improving Courthouse Signage: Procedural Justice Through Design,” Center for Court Innovation, 2015. Available at [https://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/Red%20Hook%20OctoberFinal%20Proofed\\_REDUCED%20%281%29.pdf](https://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/Red%20Hook%20OctoberFinal%20Proofed_REDUCED%20%281%29.pdf).
- “Retrofit for Fairness,” *Urban Omnibus*, Feb. 2018. Available at <https://urbanomnibus.net/2018/02/retrofit-for-fairness>.
- “Plain Language Guide,” National Association for Court Management, 2019. Available for purchase at <https://nacmnet.org/resources/publications/guides/plain-language-guide>.

## Appendix A: Signage Templates






<sup>i</sup> Courthouse security procedures and rules

---

# Welcome / Bienvenido




**Thank you for coming to court today. Please form a single line.**  
Gracias por venir a la corte hoy. Por favor, forme una sola línea.

**Please / Por favor**

-  **Bring your ID and any needed paperwork**  
Traiga identificación y cualquierla documentación necesaria
-  **Remove everything from your pockets**  
Vacíe sus bolsillos
-  **Bags subject to search**  
Bolsas sujetas a búsqueda
-  **Listen to the officer's instructions**  
Siga las indicaciones del agente judicial
-  **Silence your phone**  
Silencia su teléfono

**Scissors, tools, cameras, and other dangerous items are not permitted in the courthouse. Possession of any illegal items, such as narcotics, knives, or other weapons, may result in arrest.**

No se permite ingresar al juzgado con tijeras, herramientas, cámaras y otros artículos peligrosos. La tenencia de artículos ilegales como estupefacientes, cuchillos u otras armas podría resultar en la privación de su libertad.



**Thank you / Gracias**



---

# Court Clerk

## Secretario del Tribunal

### This is the line for the Court Clerk.

You're in the right place if you need to:

- Check on a court date
- See if you have a warrant
- Make a payment for a municipal court case
- Ask questions related to a municipal court case in this city
- File a document with the court

### Please have ready:

Tenga a mano lo siguiente:



#### A valid photo ID

Una identificación con foto válida



#### Case information (citation or correspondence from court)

Información del caso (citación o correspondencia de la corte)



#### Method of payment

Medio de pago



#### If you are not able to pay fines or costs, please provide proof of income so the court can determine whether you are eligible for alternatives.

Si no puede pagar multas o costos, presente un comprobante de ingresos para que el tribunal pueda determinar si es elegible para alternativas.

# COURTROOM RULES

Please | Por Favor



## **Follow court staff instructions**

Siga las instrucciones del personal de la corte



## **No Standing. Please take a seat.**

Tome asiento.



## **No Phones**

No Teléfonos



## **No Recording Devices**

No Dispositivos de Grabación



## **No Food / Beverages / Gum**

No Comida / Bebidas / Chicle



## **No Smoking / Tobacco**

No Fumar / Tabaco



## **No Loud Talking**

No Hablar Fuerte



## **No Hats**

No Gorros

## Appendix B: Sample Courthouse User Survey

### Procedural Justice Courthouse Environment User Survey

- 1) Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Court session:    Morning    Afternoon
- 3) Courtroom: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Had you been in this courthouse/building before today?
  - Yes
  - No
- 5) If yes, what brought you here before? (*select all that apply*)
  - My current case
  - A previous case of mine
  - Came for a friend or family member
  - Jury duty
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - N/A

*On a scale from 1 to 5, please mark how much you trust the following agencies, with 1 being not at all confident and 5 being very confident:*

	<b>1 Not at all</b>	<b>2 A little</b>	<b>3 Neutral</b>	<b>4 Somewhat</b>	<b>5 A lot</b>
6) The police					
7) The prosecutors					
8) The defense attorneys					
9) The judges					
10) Other court employees					
11) The jails					
12) City government overall					

*For the following statements, please indicate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.*

- 13) This municipal court treats defendants with dignity and respect.
  - Strongly agree
  - Somewhat agree
  - Somewhat disagree
  - Strongly disagree

14) Overall, this municipality's criminal justice system is fair.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

### NAVIGATING THE COURTHOUSE

15) How did you know where to find your courtroom or other destination in the courthouse once you got inside? (*check all that apply*)

- Had been here before
- Looked at a map or directory
- Looked at a posted list of cases
- Information desk
- Asked a court staff member
- Had it on my court paperwork
- Signs directed me to the right place
- Someone told me in advance where I should go
- Just found my own way
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

16) Did signs around the courthouse clearly direct you to your courtroom?

- Yes
- No
- N/A

*Mark whether you agree, disagree or are neutral on the following statements about the building.*

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>N/A</b>
17) Signs outside the building helped me know what to expect today.				
18) The security procedures for entering the building were clear.				
19) I was treated respectfully by the staff as I entered the building.				
20) Court staff seemed happy to answer any questions I had.				
21) I found my way around the courthouse easily.				
22) The building was clean and well maintained.				
23) Signs inside the building were confusing.				
24) I knew who to ask if I needed help finding my way around the building.				



25) What would have made the process of navigating the courthouse easier for you today?

---

---

---

## COURTROOM

26) When you got to the courtroom, how did you let court staff know that you were there?

- I did not let them know
- Followed the posted sign-in instructions
- Told my lawyer
- Told the court officer or other court staff
- Someone called my name
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

27) Did anyone tell you what the rules were in the courtroom (*i.e.*, what you could and couldn't do while you waited on the benches)?

- Yes, a court officer
- Yes, the judge
- Yes, other court staff
- Yes, my attorney
- Yes, another court user
- No one told me the courtroom rules

28) Did you see courtroom rules posted or listed anywhere in writing today? If yes, where?

(*check all that apply*)

- Yes, I saw a sign outside the courtroom door
- Yes, I saw a sign inside the courtroom
- Yes, in a pamphlet or on piece of paper someone gave me
- No, I did not see them posted or listed anywhere
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

29) Do you feel like you knew what the rules were in the courtroom?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

30) Do you feel like the signs in the courtroom were written in a respectful tone?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

31) About how long did you wait in the courtroom before your case was called? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (specify hours or minutes)

**OVERALL EXPERIENCE TODAY**

32) Overall, how do you rate the fairness of your outcome today?

- Very fair
- Somewhat fair
- Somewhat unfair
- Very unfair

33) Was the result of your case favorable or unfavorable for your side of the case?

- Favorable
- Neither
- Unfavorable

34) Were you given any paperwork to remind you what you still need to do for your case?

- Yes
- No

35) Overall, did your experience in court today make you more confident or less confident in the municipal court?

- More confident
- Had no effect
- Less confident

*For the following questions, please mark whether you are likely, unlikely or unsure that you will...*

	<b>Not Likely</b>	<b>Unsure</b>	<b>Likely</b>	<b>N/A</b>
36) ... Comply with your court order?				
37) ... Pay your fine or fees?				
38) ... Appear for your next court date?				
39) ... Obey the law in the future?				
40) ... Report a crime to the police in the future?				
41) ... Tell family members or friends of yours that the criminal justice system is fair.				

**Almost done! Final questions on the next page.**

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

*We're almost done, just a few more questions about you specifically.*

42) How do you identify your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

43) What is your race/ethnicity? (*Check all that apply.*)

- White (e.g., German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc.)
- Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin (e.g., Mexican, Puerto Rican, Brazilian, etc.)
- Black or African American (e.g., African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, etc.)
- Asian (e.g., Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc.)
- Indian (e.g. East Indian, South Indian, West Indian, Indo-Caribbean etc.)
- Native American or Alaska Native (e.g., Navajo Nation, Blackfoot Tribe, Mayan, etc.)
- Middle Eastern or North African (e.g., Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Moroccan, etc.)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (e.g., Hawaiian, Samoan, Fijian, etc.)
- Some other race, ethnicity or origin (Specify):  
\_\_\_\_\_

44) Did you graduate high school or receive a GED?

- Yes
- No

45) If there is one thing you would change about your experience in the court building today (aside from not being required to come here in the first place), what would it be?

---

---

46) Do you have anything else you would like to tell me about how you or other people are treated by the court?

---

---

---

***END OF SURVEY.***

***Thank you so much for your time and input to help improve your local court system!***

## ABOUT THE CENTER FOR COURT INNOVATION

The Center for Court Innovation works to advance procedural fairness through demonstration projects, research, and training and technical assistance to court practitioners nationally. Through support from the State Justice Institute, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and direct partnerships with localities, staff have trained hundreds of court professionals on procedural fairness and maintain a procedural fairness “speakers’ bureau” of topical experts from around the country who represent a variety of roles in the court system. The Center has developed a number of tools designed to help practitioners engage with the concept and improve their individual and agency-wide practice. Recent examples include:

- “What is Procedural Justice?,” a three-minute animated video introducing the topic, available on the Center’s Procedural Justice YouTube playlist;
- “To Be Fair,” a book of practitioner interviews about procedural justice and its applications in courts;
- “Procedural Justice: Fair Treatment Matters,” training materials that are applicable to a range of court audiences and are accompanied by a facilitator’s guide;
- “Practical Tips for Courts” outlines concrete communication strategies aligned with procedural justice; and
- Procedural Justice YouTube playlist.

[www.courtinnovation.org](http://www.courtinnovation.org)

## ABOUT THE TEXAS MUNICIPAL COURTS EDUCATION CENTER

The Texas Municipal Courts Education Center (TMCEC) strives to advance the fair and impartial administration of justice. In working toward this goal, TMCEC embraces its mission to provide high quality judicial education, technical assistance, and the necessary resource material to assist municipal judges, court support personnel, and prosecutors in obtaining and maintaining professional competence. Funded by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, the Center trains over 5,000 individuals each year on substantive legal issues, as well as best practices in court administration, such as the procedural justice initiative in partnership with the Center for Court Innovation.

*Texas Municipal Courts Face of Justice: Building Trust and Confidence through Model Court Websites and Signage* was funded by the State Justice Institute in 2018-2019, grant number SJI-18-T-033.

[www.tmcec.com](http://www.tmcec.com)