

## **MEDIA PLAN AND RULES REGARDING RECORDING BY INDIVIDUALS IN THE DISTRICT AND COUNTY COURTS AT LAW OF ORANGE COUNTY, TEXAS**

The following rules are in effect for the broadcasting, televising, photographing and recording of any courtroom activity related to the Judicial District Courts and County Courts at Law, Orange 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.

### **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, conferences with the Judge, and the trial of the case.

### **DISCRETION OF JUDGE**

- 2.1 Recording of any court proceeding is prohibited unless authorized in writing by the Judge.
- 2.2 The Judge reserves the right to limit, allow, and/or deny recording of any court proceeding.
- 2.3 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.

### **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 by Individuals is a violation of this Local Rule.**

- 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 is **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 building** of the District or County Courts is **prohibited**.
- 3.12 If another courtroom is utilized for any court proceeding, this Media Plan and Rules Regarding Recording by Individuals for the District or County Courts shall be followed, along with any modifications necessary.
- 3.13 For security reasons, **DO NOT** approach any Judge, court staff, or trial participant on the premises of the courtroom building.

## **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 District or County Court at Law 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 courtroom building. 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 by Individuals and that this Media Plan and Rules Regarding Recording by Individuals 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 this Media Plan and Rules Regarding Recording by Individuals 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.

## **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.

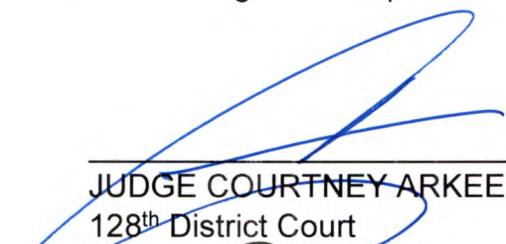
- 5.2 All media and spectators are asked to remain seated in the courtroom and avoid unnecessary entrance/exit during proceedings.
- 5.3 **AVOID** all areas where jurors may be located when outside of court proceedings, i.e., smoking areas, public restrooms.

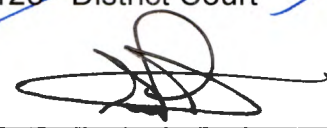
**TRIAL TRANSCRIPTS**

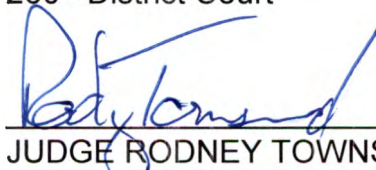
- 6.1 All requests for transcripts of court proceedings must be made in writing to the Official Court Reporter of the District or County Court at Law.

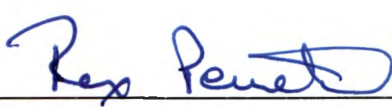
The Orange County District Clerk is directed to record these rules in the minutes of the 128<sup>th</sup>, 163<sup>rd</sup>, and 260<sup>th</sup> District Courts of Orange County, Texas. The Orange County County Clerk is directed to record these rules in the minutes of the County Court at Law and County Court at Law No. 2 of Orange County, Texas.

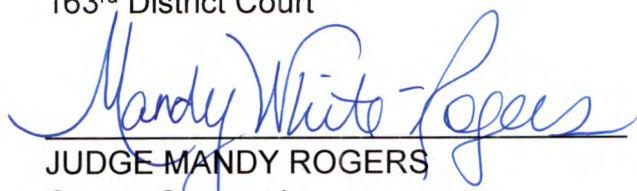
These Local Rules for the 128<sup>th</sup>, 163<sup>rd</sup> and 260<sup>th</sup> District Courts, County Court at Law, and County Court at Law No. 2 of Orange County, Texas for Family Law Proceedings are adopted and approved on February 5, 2025.

  
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JUDGE COURTNEY ARKEEN  
128<sup>th</sup> District Court

  
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JUDGE STEVE PARKHURST  
260<sup>th</sup> District Court

  
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JUDGE RODNEY TOWNSEND  
County Court at Law No. 2

  
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JUDGE REX PEVETO  
163<sup>rd</sup> District Court

  
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JUDGE MANDY ROGERS  
County Court at Law