

Public and Media Access Guide

Terms of Reference

Purpose of the document

The *Public and Media Access Guide* is a reference that explains how and when specific court records can be accessed. It explains the exceptions that make records subject to a publication ban or inaccessible to the public. It is intended to provide assistance to court staff, the public, and journalists. For court staff, the *Public and Media Access Guide* is the sole reference source for privacy and access guidance in relation to court records. Other guides and manuals will link to the *Public and Media Access Guide* for their content in this area.

Publication of the document

The *Public and Media Access Guide* will be published on the Alberta Courts website and the Court Services intranet:

- The link for the *Public and Media Access Guide* on the Alberta Courts website will be:

http://www.albertacourts.ab.ca/portals/ext/cs/public_and_media_access_guid_e.pdf

- The link for the Public and Media Access Guide on the Court Services intranet will be:

http://www.albertacourts.ab.ca/portals/ext/cs/public_and_media_access_guid_e.pdf

For members of the public, the Publications page on the Alberta Courts website will link to the *Public and Media Access Guide* and identify updates as necessary. That page will be at:

<http://www.albertacourts.ab.ca/CourtServices/Publications/tabid/280/Default.aspx>

For Court Services employees and the judiciary, the Court Services intranet site will have a page that provides:

- a link to the document on the Alberta Courts internet;
- a short introduction to the document, with updates as necessary;
- links to training materials, including FAQs, as they become available;
- an online forum that will allow staff to provide comments and questions about the *Public and Media Access Guide*;
- an explanation that comments may inform future versions of the document, and that questions may inform a list of FAQs; and
- a link to these *Terms of Reference*.

The address for that intranet page will be:

<https://intranet.albertacourts.ab.ca/employees/business/Pages/PublicandMediaAccessGuide.aspx>

Updating the document

As the *Public and Media Access Guide* includes information originating from statute and case law, it is expected that the document will change from time to time. To keep the document up to date, the following processes will determine when changes are needed.

1. The Courts Advisory Counsel maintains the currency of the *Public and Media Access Guide*. The Courts Advisory Counsel provides legal, policy, and operational advice to the judges and management of all three Courts on matters concerning the privacy of, and access to, the judgments and records of the Courts of Alberta.
2. The Court Services Transition Team informs the Courts Advisory Counsel of all prospective changes to federal and provincial legislation and ministry policy which may affect the document.
3. **Ad hoc changes:** The Courts Advisory Counsel continually monitors changes to legislation and policy that may affect the *Public and Media Access Guide*.
4. **Annual review:** The Courts Advisory Counsel conducts an annual review of the document in January of each calendar year. If, following an annual review, Courts Advisory Counsel determines no changes are required, then the document will be noted as having been “Reviewed for currency” on a specified date.

After identifying or receiving notice of a change to the legal environment, the Courts Advisory Counsel determines if a topical revision of the *Public and Media Access Guide* is necessary. If so, this process is followed:

- In the case of **ad hoc changes**, the Courts Advisory Counsel assesses if the *Public and Media Access Guide* requires immediate revision. If a quick change is not needed, the issue is revisited upon the next annual review of the document.
- For quick **ad hoc changes** and for **annual changes**, the Courts Advisory Counsel drafts text and supplies it to the Alberta Courts Public Information Committee (ACPIC) for its review and final approval. The title page of the *Public and Media Access Guide* is then updated to note the date of revision.

The Courts Advisory Counsel supplies the revised document to Court Services Transition Team for review. This review considers possible changes to procedure and assesses the need for training. The Court Services Transition Team provides updates to Court Services Leadership Team when there are changes to the policy.

The revised document is then published on Alberta Courts website and the Court Services intranet using the normal processes for publishing content. This process is described by the [Alberta Courts Web Guidelines](#) and attendant [Website Posting Protocol](#). These documents are archived in the Court Services [Privacy and Access Protocols](#) area of the Alberta Courts intranet at:

<https://intranet.albertacourts.ab.ca/CS/Pages/Protocols.aspx?RootFolder=%2fCS%2fProtocols%2f3%20%2d%20Website%20Protocols&FolderCTID=&View=%7b8A263CBA%2d8DC7%2d4C1C%2dBBAF%2dF2032B75A6A1%7d>

Communication of changes

Normal internal communication channels are used to alert Court Services staff of changes to the *Public and Media Access Guide*. This includes links on the Alberta Courts intranet to training materials, as necessary.

The Alberta Courts public webpage which hosts the document will note changes to the *Public and Media Access Guide*.

Revision of these terms of reference

These terms of reference may be revised as approved by ACPIC in consultation with the Court Services Transition Team.