

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS

It is hereby ordered that, effective immediately, Cook County Cir. Ct. G.A.O. 2013-05 (eff. June 27, 2024) is superseded by the following:

GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER No. 2024-13

SUBJECT: Cellphones and other electronic devices

Pursuant to Illinois Supreme Court Rule 44 (eff. Dec. 16, 2020) and the *Illinois Supreme Court Policy on Portable Electronic Devices* (eff. Jan. 1, 2022),

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, effective immediately, that,

1. Definitions

a. For purposes of this order, the following definitions apply:

- i. **“Chief Judge”** is the chief circuit judge of the Cook County Circuit Court
- ii. **“common areas”** are hallways and lobbies of the courthouse outside of courtrooms and offices;
- iii. **“court offices”** include the Adult Probation Department, Children’s Rooms, Office of Official Court Reporters, Family Court Services, Office of Interpreter Services, Jury Administration offices and juror assembly rooms, Juvenile Probation and Court Services Department, Social Service Department, and other office operations of the Office of the Chief Judge;
- iv. **“court visitor”** means any individual present in a courthouse in Cook County;
- v. **“portable electronic devices”** are mobile devices capable of electronically storing, accessing, or transmitting information, including, but not limited to, personal computers, tablet computers, mobile telephones (including cell phones, smartphones, and any form of telephone with a camera and audio and video recording and transmission capabilities), smartwatches, or similar devices;
- vi. **“portable readers”** are electronic calendars, e-book readers, or similar devices incapable of making audio or video recordings;
- vii. **“Presiding Judge,”** except as provided in section 2(c) below, is the presiding judge with the administrative responsibility for supervision of a Chicago branch criminal court, the Leighton Criminal Courthouse, the Domestic Violence Courthouse, juvenile court, a restorative justice criminal court, or a suburban Municipal District Courthouse, respectively.

2. In General (All Court Locations)

- a. No person, except local, state, and federal law enforcement officers on official business, shall take or broadcast photographs or make or broadcast audio or video

recordings anywhere in a common area or courtroom without prior approval of a judge or as governed by Illinois Supreme Court Rule 44, as amended;

- b. Except as provided herein, all court visitors may use portable electronic devices and portable readers in the common areas of the courthouse, such as lobbies and hallways, however all portable electronic devices must be placed in “silent” mode or turned off at all times within courtrooms and the common areas of the courthouse;
- c. The Presiding Judge has discretion to grant exceptions to the restrictions herein for the common areas of the courthouse; at the Daley Center, a Presiding Judge of a Division or the First Municipal District has discretion to grant exceptions to the restrictions herein for a courtroom assigned to that Division or District, respectively, providing all exceptions are consistent with the Illinois Supreme Court Policy on Portable Electronic Devices (eff. Jan. 1, 2022);
- d. The judge presiding in a courtroom has discretion to grant exceptions to the restrictions herein for that courtroom when that judge is presiding, providing all exceptions are consistent with the *Illinois Supreme Court Policy on Portable Electronic Devices* (eff. Jan. 1, 2022);
- e. No court visitor shall use a portable electronic device to communicate or attempt to communicate with any potential juror or juror at any time;
- f. No court visitor shall take photographs or make recordings of persons or activities in a courtroom or court office from the hallway or lobby;
- g. No court visitor shall use a portable electronic device to harass or intimidate any witness at any time;
- h. No court visitor shall use a portable electronic device to communicate with any witness in violation of a court order excluding or sequestering a witness at any time;
- i. **Other Electronic Devices.** Cameras, video cameras, video recording equipment, and recording devices not classified as “portable electronic devices” are not allowed in the courthouse, unless permitted by the Chief Judge, Presiding Judge, or judge presiding and on such conditions as ordered, for ceremonial events such as marriages, investitures, and graduations in problem solving courts or as outlined in Cook County Cir. Ct. G.A.O. No. 2014-12 (Extended Media Coverage), the Illinois Supreme Court’s *Policy for Extended Media Coverage in the Circuit Courts of Illinois*, and Illinois Supreme Court Rule 44.

3. Use in Courtrooms.

- a. At the discretion of the judge presiding, case participants, including lawyers, parties (including self-represented litigants), and witnesses may use a “portable electronic device” in a courtroom to check calendars or present case-related information.
- b. Members of the news media may use portable electronic devices to take notes or to communicate in writing with news media colleagues, unless the judge presiding orders otherwise to maintain proper courtroom decorum or to maintain the integrity of the judicial process;

4. Use in Court Offices - Because inappropriate use of “portable electronic devices” in court offices can be a danger to court visitors, cause distractions or intentional or unintentional disruptions in the order and processes of the courts, or adversely impact the orderly

administration of justice, no person shall take or broadcast photographs or make or broadcast audio or video recordings anywhere in a court office without prior approval of the Chief Judge or Presiding Judge.

5. **Use in Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) offices** - Because inappropriate use of “portable electronic devices” in DCFS offices can cause the unwarranted invasion of personal privacy and unduly increase the risk of irrevocable harm to families and children, no person shall take photographs or make audio or video recordings of persons or activities within a DCFS office without prior approval of the Chief Judge or a Presiding Judge;
6. **Confiscation of Equipment and Ejection:** Court visitors using a “portable electronic device” or possessing other electronic devices in violation of this or any other court order or policy may have their phone confiscated, may be removed from the courthouse, may be held in contempt of court, and are subject to penalties as provided by law. Any “portable electronic device” used in violation of an order may be confiscated and held until all investigative and court proceedings are concluded. At the discretion of the Chief Judge, Presiding Judge, or the judge presiding, any unauthorized audio or video recording or photograph shall be preserved until all investigative and court proceedings are concluded and shall then be deleted from the device. Court personnel shall not be responsible or liable for any damage to or loss of a confiscated “portable electronic device.”
7. **Additional restrictions at the Leighton Criminal Courthouse.** To avoid interference with the administration of justice or threats to safety or security to court visitors, except as noted below, all “portable electronic devices” and “other electronic devices” are prohibited in the George N. Leighton Criminal Courthouse, 2600 S. California Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.
 - a. The following persons, all of whom must have proper identification and be on official business in the courthouse, are authorized to possess “portable electronic devices” and “other electronic devices.” Social visits and business for the purpose of addressing one's own private, personal interests are not considered to be official business.
 - i. current or former judges;
 - ii. licensed attorneys;
 - iii. authorized employees of attorneys, if the employee has been authorized by the Chief Judge, Presiding Judge, or the judge presiding;
 - iv. members of the news media.
 1. Upon approval by the judge presiding, and subject to denial or limitation by the Chief Judge or Presiding Judge, pursuant to Cook County Cir. Ct. G.A.O No. 2014-12 (Extended Media Coverage) and the Illinois Supreme Court's Policy for Extended Media Coverage in the Circuit Courts of Illinois, Ill. S. Ct., M.R. 2634 (eff. Feb. 22, 2016), members of the news media may also use their electronic devices in the courtroom to communicate with news media colleagues, provided court is not in session;
 2. While court is in session, members of the news media may use portable electronic devices only to take notes or to communicate in writing with news media colleagues, unless the judge presiding orders

otherwise to maintain proper courtroom decorum or to maintain the integrity of the judicial process;

- v. employees of any local, state, or federal government agencies or offices for use in their official duties;
- vi. any person reporting for jury duty pursuant to summons. Individuals selected for jury service are also subject to the order(s) of the trial judge presiding, who may make orders as to the possession or use of electronic devices by potential or sworn jurors during trial sessions and deliberations.
- vii. building and maintenance tradespeople, equipment repair persons, and vendors with proper authorization for whom such devices are necessary in the performance of their job;
- viii. domestic violence advocates or counselors, as defined by 750 ILCS 60/227(a)(2);
- ix. persons who are present at the court facility to obtain protective orders, as defined in Part 22 of the Rules of the Circuit Court of Cook County, or to attend court proceedings related to the incident(s) underlying the protective order or other proceedings;
- x. participants in a domestic violence assistance program, as defined and identified by the Presiding Judge of the Domestic Violence Division;
- xi. disabled persons, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, whose disabilities necessitate the use of an electronic device to communicate and who are permitted by the Court Disabilities Coordinator or court order to possess and use such devices in the court facility, including the courtrooms;
- xii. persons required by court order or the sheriff to wear an electronic monitoring device may wear the device;
- xiii. parties to protective orders, as defined in Part 22 of the Rules of the Circuit Court of Cook County, who are furnished with or required to carry global positioning (GPS) devices may possess the device;
- xiv. any other person or category of persons authorized by order of court to possess an electronic device, as defined above, in the court facility.

b. The persons described above in sections (i) through (xiv) may use the telephone, SMS (short message service) texting, instant messaging, email, and word processing functions of an electronic device only in the public areas of the courthouse outside the courtrooms, and said electronic devices must remain off or in "silent" mode when in courtrooms, unless otherwise expressly permitted by the judge presiding.

8. Persons at court locations, other than the George N. Leighton Criminal Courthouse, may use the telephone, SMS (short message service) texting, instant messaging, email, and word processing functions of a cell phone or other electronic device only in the public areas of the courthouse outside the courtrooms, and said electronic devices must remain off when in courtrooms, unless otherwise expressly permitted by the judge presiding.

9. Nothing in this order shall be construed to affect a judge's authority to permit attorneys and self-represented (*pro se*) litigants with cases before the judge to use such devices in the courtroom for purposes such as making evidentiary and other presentations to the court, preparing orders and other court documents, making entries in a case management application, or any other purpose the judge deems appropriate.
10. Nothing in this order shall be interpreted to restrict recording on the outdoor premises of a courthouse, provided the recording activity does not disrupt court operations, obstruct access to or from the courthouse, or compromise the confidentiality, safety, or security of courthouse visitors.
11. Pursuant to Illinois Supreme Court Rule 44 (eff. Dec. 16, 2020), nothing in this order shall be interpreted to permit the taking of photographs or the broadcasting of audio or video recordings made in the courtroom or of proceedings conducted by videoconference during sessions of the court or recesses between proceedings, or the broadcasting or televising of court proceedings unless authorized by an order of the Chief Judge, Presiding Judge, or judge presiding permitting extended media coverage or an order of the Supreme Court.
12. Any person in violation of this order may be subject to prosecution for contempt of court. Nothing in this order shall be construed to infringe upon the authority of the Cook County Sheriff or the judge presiding to deny courthouse or courtroom access to any person in the interest of public safety.
13. The sheriff of Cook County, or his or her designee, or any peace officer shall enforce this order by causing violators of this order to appear before this court for a hearing and for the imposition of such sanctions as the court may deem just and proper.

This order supersedes General Administrative Orders 2012-08 and 2013-01.

Dated this 27th day of August 2024.