

AO No. 1989-1 — Film or Electronic Media Coverage of Court Proceedings

[Entered January 13, 1989; effective March 1, 1989; text as amended by order of December 5, 2012, effective January 1, 2013.]

The following guidelines shall apply to film or electronic media coverage of proceedings in Michigan courts:

1. Definitions.

(a) “Film or electronic media coverage” means any recording or broadcasting of court proceedings by the media using television, radio, photographic, or recording equipment.

(b) “Media” or “media agency” 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, professional journal, or other news reporting or news gathering agency.

(c) “Judge” means the judge presiding over a proceeding in the trial court, the presiding judge of a panel in the Court of Appeals, or the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

2. Limitations.

(a) In the trial courts.

(i) Film or electronic media coverage shall be allowed upon request in all court proceedings. Requests by representatives of media agencies for such coverage must be made in writing to the clerk of the particular court not less than three business days before the proceeding is scheduled to begin. A judge has the discretion to honor a request that does not comply with the requirements of this subsection. The court shall provide that the parties be notified of a request for film or electronic media coverage.

(ii) A judge may terminate, suspend, limit, or exclude film or electronic media coverage at any time upon a finding, made and articulated on the record in the exercise of discretion, that the fair administration of justice requires such action, or that rules established under this order or additional rules imposed by the judge have been violated. The judge has sole discretion to exclude coverage of certain witnesses, including but not limited to the victims of sex crimes and their families, police informants, undercover agents, and relocated witnesses.

(iii) Film or electronic media coverage of the jurors or the jury selection process shall not be permitted.

(iv) A trial judge’s decision to terminate, suspend, limit, or exclude film or electronic media coverage is not appealable, by right or by leave.

(b) In the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court.

(i) Film or electronic media coverage shall be allowed upon request in all court proceedings except for good cause as determined under MCR 8.116(D)(1). Requests by representatives of media agencies for such coverage must be made in writing to the clerk of the particular court not less than three business days before the proceeding is scheduled to begin. A judge has the discretion to honor a request that does not comply with the requirements of this subsection. The court shall provide that the parties be notified of a request for film or electronic media coverage.

(ii) A judge may terminate, suspend, limit, or exclude film or electronic media coverage at any time upon a finding, made and articulated on the record, that good cause requires such action or that rules established under this order or additional rules imposed by the judge have been violated. If a court makes such a finding, it must issue an order that states with particularity the reasons for termination, suspension, limitation, or exclusion of film or electronic media coverage.

(iii) If a judge of the Court of Appeals terminates, suspends, limits, or excludes film or electronic media coverage, the person who requested permission to film or otherwise provide for electronic media coverage may appeal that decision to the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals. If the Chief Judge affirms the judge's decision, the requester may appeal by leave to the Supreme Court.

3. Judicial Authority. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed as altering the authority of the Chief Justice, the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, trial court chief judges, or trial judges to control proceedings in their courtrooms, and to ensure decorum and prevent distractions and to ensure the fair administration of justice in the pending cause.

4. Equipment and Personnel. Unless the judge orders otherwise, the following rules apply:

(a) Not more than two videotape or television cameras, operated by not more than one person each, shall be permitted in any courtroom.

(b) Not more than two still photographers, utilizing not more than two still cameras each with not more than two lenses for each camera, and related necessary equipment, shall be permitted in any courtroom.

(c) Not more than one audio system for radio and/or television recording purposes shall be permitted in any courtroom. If such an audio system is permanently in place in the courtroom, pickup shall be made from that system; if it is not, microphones and wires shall be placed as unobtrusively as possible.

(d) Media agency representatives shall make their own pooling arrangements without calling upon the court to mediate any dispute relating to those arrangements. In the absence of media agency agreement on procedures, personnel, and equipment, the judge shall not permit the use of film or electronic media coverage.

5. Sound and Light Criteria.

(a) Only television, photographic, and audio equipment which does not produce distracting sound or light shall be utilized to cover judicial proceedings. Courtroom lighting shall be supplemented only if the judge grants permission.

(b) Only still camera equipment which does not produce distracting sound or light shall be employed to cover judicial proceedings. No artificial lighting device of any kind shall be employed with a still camera.

(c) Media agency personnel must demonstrate in advance, to the satisfaction of the judge, that the equipment proposed for utilization will not detract from the proceedings.

6. Location of Equipment and Personnel.

(a) Television camera equipment and attendant personnel shall be positioned in such locations in the courtroom as shall be designated by the judge. Audio and video tape recording and amplification

equipment which is not a component of a camera or microphone shall be located in a designated area remote from the courtroom.

(b) Still camera photographers shall be positioned in such locations in the courtroom as shall be designated by the judge. Still camera photographers shall assume fixed positions within the designated areas and shall not move about in any way that would detract from the proceedings.

(c) Photographic or audio equipment may be placed in, moved about in, or removed from, the courtroom only during a recess. Camera film and lenses may be changed in the courtroom only during a recess.

(d) Representatives of the media agencies are invited to submit suggested equipment positions to the judge for consideration.

7. Conferences. There shall be no audio pickup, broadcast or video closeup of conferences between an attorney and client, between co-counsel, between counsel and the judge held at the bench at trial, or between judges in an appellate proceeding.

8. Conduct of Media Agency Personnel. Persons assigned by media agencies to operate within the courtroom shall dress and deport themselves in ways that will not detract from the proceedings.

9. Nonexclusivity. These guidelines shall not preclude coverage of any judicial proceeding by news reporters or other persons who are employing more traditional means, such as taking notes or drawing pictures.