

Public Relations

Key concepts Courts and the Public Media Relations

Executive Summary

One of the court leaders' key roles is to communicate with a wide range of audiences to enhance the public's understanding of the court and its role in preserving the rule of law and protecting individual rights. Without public understanding of the court and its processes, the public's trust and confidence in the court can be eroded. To be effective at providing public information, court leaders need to communicate what courts do to a wide range of audiences, including the news media. The court leader's overall goal for these communications should focus on promoting the public's understanding of the role of the court in preserving the rule of law and safeguarding the fundamental constitutional and legal rights of all individuals.

Learning Objectives

As a result of this education, participants will be able to:

- Discuss the tension between the court's ability to discharge its constitutional mandate to uphold the rule of Law and the public's interest in and right to information;
- List the limitations of public access to court records and proceedings, including alternatives the court may offer;
- Prepare and critique press releases using standard criteria;
- Design media strategies for hypothetical situations using new tools and criteria; and
- Design a publicity campaign demonstrating knowledge of methods of communicating through news media, social media, and public outreach methods.

Activities

There are corresponding activities for each learning objective, including:

- Challenges for the Court & Public Access and the Limitations
- Drafting and Critiquing Press Releases
- Developing a Media Strategy

Curricular Resources

The full curriculum has a detailed listing of relevant resources and a bibliography.

- NACM/CCPIO Media Guide
- Conference of Court Public Information Officers (ccpio.org)

Public Relations Curriculum

Revised July 2024

Section 1 | Courts and the Public: A Historical Perspective

- The State of the Judicial Branch
- The Judicial Branch of Government

Section 2 | Courts and the Media: Balancing Roles and Responsibilities

- Legal Framework
- Decisional Framework
- Ethical Framework
- The Court's Role in Public Relations
- Who Are the Media?

Section 3 | Media Relations: Tools, Tips, and Strategies

- Building Relationships
- Delivering the Most Effective Messages
- Choosing the Method/Mean of Communication
- Interacting with the Media
- Use of Social Media by Courts

Section 4 | Court Communications

- Role of Court Staff in Charge of Public Information
- Resources for Court Personnel Serving as PIOs
- Communications Tools, Tips, and Strategies
- Coordination with the Bar

Section 5 | Community Outreach

- Outreach to Increase Public Awareness of the Courts
- Teachers and Students
- Outreach to the Other Branches of Government
- Coordinating Council
- Speaking at Events
- Courthouse Visitors

“Public relations are a key component of any operation in this day of instant communication and righty inquisitive citizens.”

— Alvin Adams

General Resources:

[Public Relations – NACM CORE[®] Curriculum](https://nacmnet.org/competency/public-relations)
nacmnet.org/competency/public-relations

[NACM CORE[®]: What Court Professionals Need to Know](https://nacmnet.org/nacm-core)
nacmnet.org/nacm-core

[The CORE[®] in Practice – a Guide to Strengthen Court Professionals through Application, Use, and Implementation](https://nacmnet.org/wp-content/uploads/THE-CORE-IN-PRACTICE-Guide-2023.pdf)
nacmnet.org/wp-content/uploads/THE-CORE-IN-PRACTICE-Guide-2023.pdf