

How to Build Your Court Website: Best Practices

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Agenda

Accessible & Easy to Navigate

Procedural Fairness

Safe & Secure

Resources

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**ACCESSIBLE &
EASY TO
NAVIGATE**

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Accessibility: What does that mean??

- Making websites easier to use and more effective for everyone.
 - Impacts many common disabilities (dyslexia, color blindness, etc.).
 - Can be better for people without disabilities too.
- Complying with federal law (ADA) & avoiding liability.

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Keys to Accessibility

- Easy to read fonts
- Good contrast
- Using the space on the page to make content easy to follow
- Being careful with color
- Using video captions and alternative text
- Following widely accepted standards
- Reminding yourself to ask the questions:
 - Who is this information for?
 - Who might read this?

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Not Enough Time

- Accessibility is a big subject
- Lots of resources out there
 - Example: Texas Tech University
 - <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/elearning/accessibility/>
- Accessibility checkers in software programs
- Lots of webinars
- Other courses where we discuss accessibility

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**PROCEDURAL
FAIRNESS**

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Components of
Procedural
Fairness

Organized (*also helps with
accessibility*)

Respectful

Easy to understand

Litigants feel heard

Neutral

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People are more likely to accept decisions
when they:

- Believe they were treated with dignity and **respect**
- **Understand** the process.
- Had a chance to be **heard (voice)**
- Believe the decision-making process is neutral and unbiased (**neutrality**)

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Best Practices for Court Websites

Information from:
*Building Public Trust and
Confidence Through
Model Court Websites*

Produced by the Center
for Court Innovation and
the Texas Municipal Court
Education Center

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Why Websites?

You are all in this class, but are you still wondering?

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Mobile phone ownership over time

The vast majority of Americans – 96% – now own a cellphone of some kind. The share of Americans that own smartphones is now 81%, up from just 35% in Pew Research Center’s first survey of smartphone ownership conducted in 2011. Along with mobile phones,

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While most of these websites are designed and maintained by well-intentioned court professionals, the variety of capacity and quality varies considerably. These websites tend to be jargon-heavy and can fail to strike the right balance of quantity and quality of information. Some overly focus on the payment of fines and fees, perhaps shortcutting a process that should also assert the rights of defendants to plead not guilty and contest their charges. Others simply offer very little content because of limited resources and attention.

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Let's do a little poll. Everyone stand up!
Sit down if the answer is NO.

- My court has a website.
- Our website has contact info including Judge name, hours, phone, and address.
- Our website provides resources such as forms, info sheets.
- Our website and resources use simple, easy to understand language.
- Our website is well-designed and professional.

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Where are
you at?

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Key Components

Helpful contact us info

Good design and accessibility

Personalized

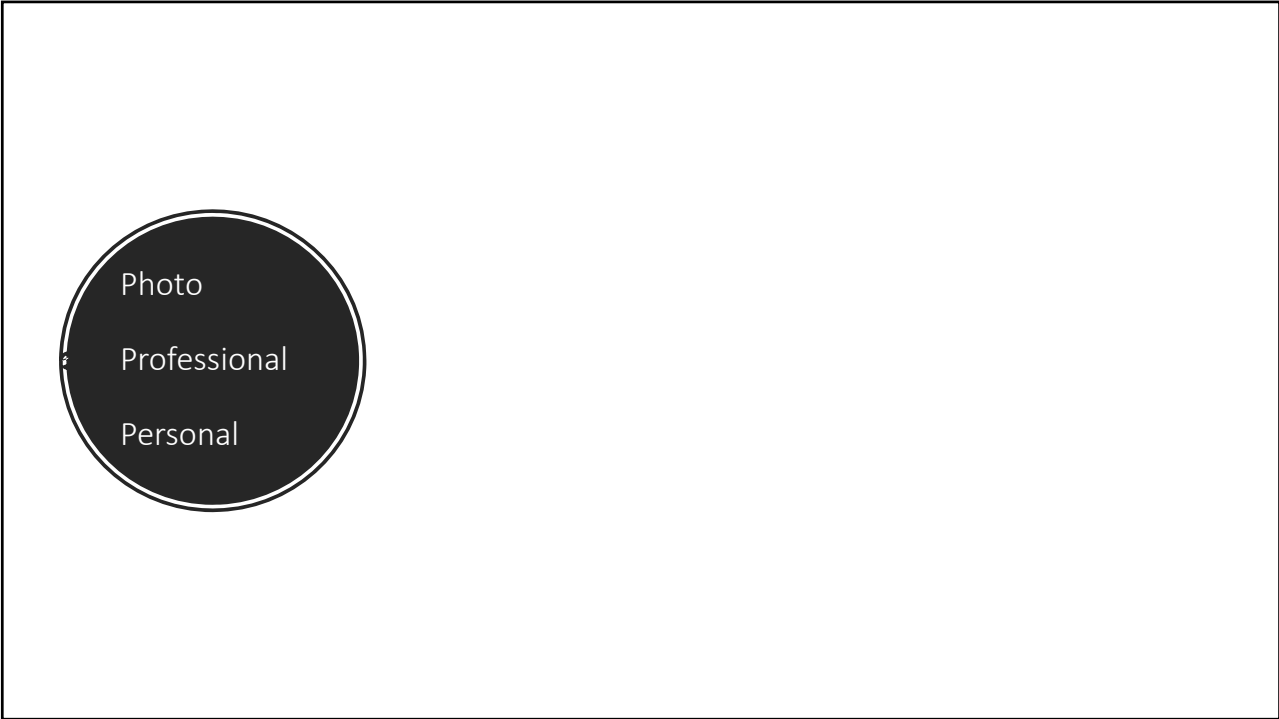
Forms and other resources

Now, let's look at some examples!

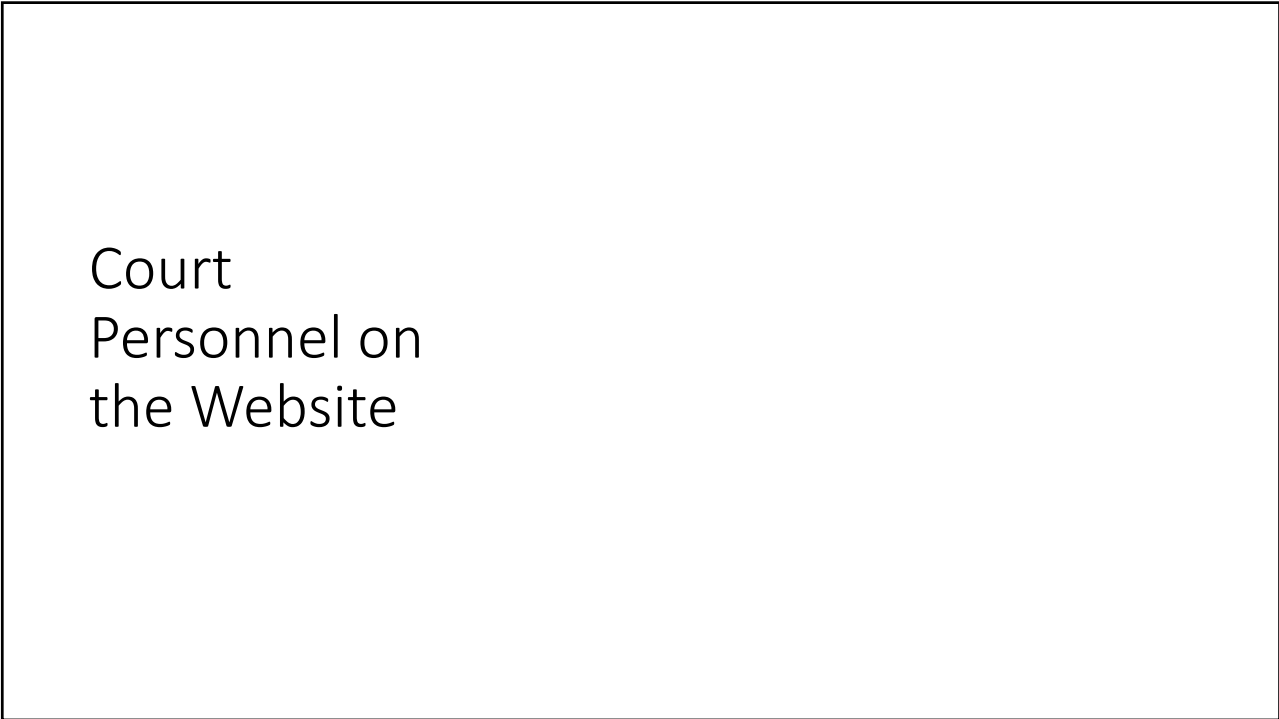
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Zavala County – photo of courthouse + google map embedded + judge and clerk name

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Face with a
Name

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Helpful
Resources

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Judge Swearingen's Office - FAQs

Questions	Answers
After I get a traffic ticket, how long should I wait to pay it?	If you come to the Justice Court before the date shown on your citation, it is possible that the officer who gave you the citation has not yet filed it with the court. Justice Court One will mail you a courtesy letter once the officer has filed the citation with the Court. Look up case records.
Are the forms online?	Most of the Justice Court 1 forms are available online. Call our office if you have any questions.
Can I receive legal advice from the Justice Court?	No. It is illegal for clerks to give opinions or legal advice. You may seek professional legal counsel or research legal issues in the Law Library in room 420, on the 4th floor of the Old Courthouse 817-884-1481. The Texas Government Code Section 81.102 provides that it is illegal for our clerks or any of our personnel to give legal opinion or advice.
Can Justice Court clerks help me fill out forms?	No.

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Language Access

- Did you know that 8.61 million Texas citizens speak a non-English language?
- 26% (7.25 million) of the Texas population are native Spanish speakers?
- We also have many native speakers of Vietnamese, Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese), other Asian languages, African languages, Tagalog, Hindi, French, Urdu, and German.

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Can you spot some areas for improvement?

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What are some issues with this?

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Many JP sites
have a list of
duties.

What could
we do here to
make this
more useful?
Use your
activity sheet.

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SAFE & SECURE

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Cybersecurity

“The art of protecting networks, devices, and data from unauthorized access or criminal use.”

- U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency

- Networks = Wifi, VPN
- Devices = Computers, phones
- Data = Pieces of information online

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State Mandated Cybersecurity Training

- <https://www.county.org/Education-Training/State-Mandated-Cybersecurity-Course>
- A new state law, HB 3834, effective June 14, 2019, requires all local government employees and elected officials who have access to a local government computer system or database to complete a cybersecurity training program certified by the Texas Department of Information Resources (DIR) at least annually.

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Work with Your IT Department!

They have
expertise.

They are
there to help!

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RESOURCES

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We can't afford it??

- TJCTC Fines, Fees, and Costs Deskbook

Justice Court Assistance and Technology Fund

Authorizing Statute: Code of Criminal Procedure Art. 102.0173

This fund can be used for:

- Technological enhancement and education for justice courts, as defined in Art. 102.0173(d),
- Effective September 1, 2019, technological enhancements for constables' offices that directly relate to the operation or efficiency of the justice court, and
- Effective September 1, 2019, education, benefits, and salaries for court personnel.

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Technology Fund

Items specifically authorized as technological enhancements in Art. 102.0173 include:

- (1) computer systems;
- (2) computer networks;
- (3) computer hardware;
- (4) computer software;
- (5) imaging systems;
- (6) electronic kiosks;
- (7) electronic ticket writers; and
- (8) docket management systems.

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Texas
Association of
Counties
Resources

TAC CIRA: Technology Solutions
for Counties

[https://www.county.org/TAC-
CIRA](https://www.county.org/TAC-CIRA)

Website hosting, management,
and training in addition to other
technology services