

Prepared by Rule 1:19 Subcommittee

SJC Rule 1:19 Changes

The proposed rule changes are designed to accommodate the changing nature of both journalists and the way news is reported while still maintaining order and decorum in the Massachusetts Courts.

1. The news media would be defined as those who are regularly engaged in the reporting and publishing of news or information about matters of public interest. This would include citizen journalists and bloggers who meet this standard.
2. Those seeking to cover the courts using the permitted technology would be required to register with the Public Information Officer of the Supreme Judicial Court, confirm that they meet the definition and agree to follow the rules of 1:19. A judge would have the discretion, but not be required to permit a person who had not registered to use the technology.
3. The news media would be allowed to use laptop computers and other electronic communication devices inside courtrooms so long as they did not disrupt the proceedings.
4. Covert photography, recording or transmission is prohibited.
5. In addition to one video and one still camera, a second mechanically silent video camera would be allowed for use by media other than broadcast television and still photographers.
6. A judge still retains the right to limit or suspend electronic coverage if it would create a harmful consequence.
7. The media will be specifically required to work out arrangements for sharing of video and still photographs.
8. Motions to suppress are now open for electronic coverage.
9. The rule changes apply to Magistrates conducting public proceedings.

