

**GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS**  
**Arizona Court Watch Collaborative**

- I. WATCH & DOCUMENT
- II. IMPORTANT COURTHOUSE TIPS AND ETIQUETTE
- III. OTHER TIPS

I. WATCH & DOCUMENT

- A. Whether applicants or respondents are treated in an intimidating, demeaning or discriminatory manner by the judge or other court personnel, as indicated by:
  - 1. Using a tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language
  - 2. Making statements indicating that the applicant should not have applied for the protection of the court or that applicant is not credible because of economic status, appearance, race, etc.
  - 3. Recommending couples' counseling in situations of physical endangerment
  - 4. Making comments that suggest the abuse was deserved or invited
  - 5. Cutting off the testimony of applicant or respondent
  - 6. Issuing mutual protective orders when one of the parties did not petition the court for a PO
  - 7. Allowing respondent to continue to abuse and/or endanger applicant, through granting repeated continuances, or failing to allow the applicant to leave the court in a manner to avoid an unwelcome encounter with the respondent
  - 8. Granting an order to the respondent instead of or in addition to the applicant.
- B. Are common courtesies offered the applicant?
  - 1. Is s/he offered water while on the stand?
  - 2. Is s/he offered Kleenex while on the stand (if needed)?
  - 3. Is applicant offered a break if s/he is on the stand for a long period, or is emotionally distraught? If not, can s/he ask for a break?
  - 4. When the judge has a consultation in chambers, are the parties left alone in the court room?
  - 5. Does the judge consult in chambers with only one of the attorneys in the case?
- C. If the applicant is denied a protective order, explain the judge's reasoning for this ruling.

## II. IMPORTANT COURTHOUSE TIPS AND ETIQUETTE

As representatives of Arizona Court Watch Collaborative, your demeanor and appearance are important as they convey our commitment to objectivity, impartiality, and respect for the Court. Courtroom traditions may seem strange and unfamiliar at first, but they are steeped in history and deserve to be followed with respect. Although you may personally disagree with some rules, or with the court's decisions, it is necessary to set aside personal feelings in order to create an accurate record.

Here are a few simple guidelines:

1. **Act with confidence and a professional demeanor.** If the bailiff, court clerk or judge asks who you are or why you are there, do not be offended or alarmed. S/he is checking to ensure that you aren't a witness. Court procedures are open to the public, and you have the right to be there. In special circumstances the judge is empowered to deem otherwise, and s/he has the final word on this matter. Make a note of such a ruling, but do not challenge it.
2. **Dress in business casual.** Over the years, dress at the courthouse has become increasingly casual. However, representatives of Arizona Court Watch should maintain a neat, businesslike appearance. A polite bearing, with your court watch materials carried in a briefcase, bag or on a clipboard, will give an appropriate impression of our Project's mission. Because courtrooms tend to be cold, you may want to bring a sweater or light jacket.
3. **Do not interact with the jury.** This could be construed as an attempt to influence the jury and could cause a mistrial.
4. **Do not react emotionally, with sound or facial expressions, to statements heard from witnesses, attorneys or judges.** You may hear things in court that make you angry, disgusted, sad or shocked, but your demeanor must remain calm and objective. Your audible or physical reactions could be seen as an effort to influence the court, and lead to your being required to leave for the remainder of the proceedings.
5. **Do not comment on the case where you can be overheard.** You may well have strong personal responses to a case, but Arizona Court Watch must remain impartial. Jurors, opposing counsel, family members and witnesses may be frequenting the same hallways, restrooms, cafeterias, restaurants, and elevators that you are. Court personnel are also likely to be present, and may convey a mistaken impression of bias to the judge. Do not comment on the case while you are in the court house or in its vicinity.
6. **Do not transmit personal information that you learn in these hearings to friends and associates.** Our mission is to gather accurate and unbiased information about multiple cases, to be reported with personal information removed. Acting as a source for such personal information will conflict with this mission. Remember that personal reputations are on the line and that stories about those involved may be subject to misinterpretation and distortion.

7. **Be prepared for multiple re-settings and delays.** It can be frustrating to arrange your day around a hearing, only to find that it has been delayed, but please remain flexible.
8. **Do not seek out conversations with any people who are involved in the case(s) you are observing.** If someone approaches you for information about Arizona Court Watch, please ask him or her for contact information, to pass along to the Steering Committee.
9. **Stand up each time the judge enters or leaves the room,** even if the bailiff does not give the signal to do so. Sit down only after the judge or clerk instructs you to do so.
10. **Address the judge as “Your Honor.”** Even if you personally know the judge as a social friend, in the legal setting and surrounding areas of the court complex, **always** address him/her formally.
11. **Remember to take care of yourself.** During a stressful hearing or trial, you may find yourself reacting by literally holding your breath, which can result in muscle aches or a headache. Take some deep breaths, if this happens. When there is a break, feel free to stand up, stretch, walk out into the hallway, and remember to drink plenty of water.

After the hearing, take measures to decompress. If you have a Court Watch partner, you may want to share responses to work off the tension. Remember not to discuss the case at all in or around the court house. Make a note of matters you found particularly stressful to discuss later with another volunteer or a Steering Committee member. Plan a pleasant activity to combat your tension after you leave the court house for the day.

12. **If you have questions or comments, write them down and include them with your forms.** Please do not hesitate to email or phone members of the Steering Committee with questions or concerns.

## II. OTHER TIPS

- Everyone entering courthouses must submit to security procedures, including walking through metal detectors, and possibly having bags searched. Place your purse or briefcase on the conveyor belt. Put any metal objects in a small tray on the table. The process is similar to screening at the airport.
- **Turn off your cell phone and pager. Court rules prohibit use of phones in the courtrooms.**
- Because some people in the courthouse have criminal histories, keep an eye on your belongings.
- Water fountains and rest rooms are usually found on each floor.
- Feel free to bring a cushion to sit on. In some of the older courtrooms, the chairs and benches are hard.
- Smoking is not allowed anywhere in the building.

- Gum or tobacco chewing is not allowed in the courtroom. **If you must have cough drops or mints, unwrap several and carry them in a baggie.** Candy unwrapping irritates everyone in the court.
- Be early; don't be late. This is an important courtesy we owe the court.
- Don't hesitate to alert a court guard to any potentially dangerous situation you observe. Safety is the reason they are there.
- Never interrupt the proceedings.
- Always be courteous, no matter the provocation. If you are barred from a courtroom or asked not to take notes, please do not argue. Leave the courtroom and tell the Steering Committee about the problem. Don't be offended; it isn't personal.
- Do not record or photograph any of the courtroom proceedings.
- Refer questions about Arizona Court Watch to your contact person.

**Thank You!** Although you will probably not receive many thanks while you're in the court room, remember that you are providing a crucial service for those who have experienced family violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. The steering committee will keep you updated on the progress of the project and the results we achieve. We thank you in advance for the important part you are playing!



