



Policy of the Provincial Court of British Columbia

Access to Court Records

Effective Date:	Policy Code:
June 26, 2024	ACC-2
Scope of Application	
Applies to:	
Media Public Provincial Court of British Columbia records	

Purpose of Policy

To specify who has access to which types of court records, in accordance with any related legislative requirements.

The Court establishes the general guidelines governing access, and judges of the Court determine issues concerning access in individual cases where more specific direction is necessary.

For access to parts of the Court record that are not expressly addressed in this policy, an application must be made to the Court for an order permitting access.

Access to the Court's published reasons for judgment are available on the Court's website [here](#).

Background Information

It is an established rule that our Court is open to the public, but that access to court records must be supervised by the Court to ensure that the ends of justice are not subverted by inappropriate disclosure. Curtailment of public access is only justified where there is a need to protect a social value of superordinate importance. For instance, broad legislative restrictions exist with respect to access to court documents in regard to matters involving youth in family and criminal proceedings. Consistent application of the following access policies by Court Registries across the province is expected by the Court.

Case law on the subject of disclosure of court records indicates that there are several broad policy considerations involved in access to court file documents. The presumption is in favour of public access and the burden of contrary proof lies upon the person who would deny the exercise of that right. Undoubtedly every court has a supervisory and protecting power over its own records. Access can be denied when the ends of justice



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would be subverted by disclosure or the judicial documents might be used for an improper purpose. See *Nova Scotia (Attorney General) v. MacIntyre*, [1982] 1 SCR 175. The constitutional principles of freedom of expression and the openness of courts are of crucial importance. Freedom of expression "protects listeners as well as speakers" which means that listeners and readers, as members of the public, have a right to information pertaining to public institutions and particularly the courts. This is significant in terms of media access to courts and court records. As noted in *Edmonton Journal v. Alberta (Attorney General)*, [1989] 2 SCR 1326:

Here the press plays a fundamentally important role. It is exceedingly difficult for many, if not most, people to attend a court trial. Neither working couples nor mothers or fathers house-bound with young children, would find it possible to attend court. Those who cannot attend rely in large measure upon the press to inform them about court proceedings -- the nature of the evidence that was called, the arguments presented, the comments made by the trial judge -- in order to know not only what rights they may have, but how their problems might be dealt with in court. It is only through the press that most individuals can really learn of what is transpiring in the courts. They as "listeners" or readers have a right to receive this information. Only then can they make an assessment of the institution. Discussion of court cases and constructive criticism of court proceedings is dependent upon the receipt by the public of information as to what transpired in court. Practically speaking, this information can only be obtained from the newspapers or other media. It is equally important for the press to be able to report upon and for the citizen to receive information pertaining to court documents.

Timeliness is essential to ensure access to court files and documents. The ability of court staff to facilitate timely access can be affected by various factors. For example, where on-site storage is limited, some files may be transferred off site. By necessity, the time required for access to files and documents that are stored off-site will be longer than for files and documents stored at the courthouse. In addition, court staff must prioritize their responsibilities to ensure matters scheduled before the court are proceeding, that the needs of parties and witnesses are met, and that judicial direction is followed. Against this background, court staff must facilitate access to court files and documents as quickly as possible.

Policy

1. Access to Court Records for Adult Criminal Proceedings (and Traffic Court, as applicable)

1.1 The following policy provides direction regarding access to court record information in adult criminal proceedings (and Traffic Court, as applicable).



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1.2 The manager or court administrator shall respond to a request for access to court records as quickly as reasonably possible. Noting the comments in the above policy statement, the expectation of the Court is that for routine access requests, there should be no significant delay in the public and the media gaining access to court records.

1.3 Members of the public may have access to case information through [Court Services Online](#) or at a public inquiry terminal at the registry where the case is being heard.

	Type of document	Access policy
1	Affidavits	Access restricted to Crown counsel, defence counsel and accused until after the matter is heard in court.
2	Application for Wire-Tap	No access – (s. 187 <i>Criminal Code</i>).
3	Applications for Orders	Access restricted to Crown counsel, defence counsel and accused until after application is heard. Wire-tap applications are completely restricted (s. 187 <i>Criminal Code</i>).
4	Bail Documents – Undertaking to Appear, Recognizance, Promise to Appear, Appearance Notice, Release Order	Unrestricted access except in the case of promises to appear and appearance notices if the Crown does not proceed with a charge, or a Justice of the Peace does not confirm process. (In these exceptions, access only to Crown counsel, defence counsel and accused). Regarding Surety Applications and Affidavits of Justification, there is no access except to the applicant and Crown counsel.
5	Bans on Publication	The general rule regarding bans on publication under ss. 278.95, 486.4, 486.5, 517, 520(9), 521(10), 539(1), 542(2) or 672.501 of the <i>Criminal Code</i> is that the onus is on the publisher not to publish. Documents subject to a ban on publication pursuant to ss. 278.95, 486.4, 486.5, 517, 520(9), 521(10), 539(1), 542(2), or 672.501 of the <i>Criminal Code</i> should be clearly marked as such with a copy attached of the relevant section of the <i>Code</i> containing the ban. All documents may be accessed by persons ordinarily having access to that document.
6	Certification of Conviction	Unrestricted access except after accused is record suspended/pardoned, then restricted. However, a procedure is available for record suspended/pardoned offenders to obtain access to their own record suspended/pardoned court file. Inquiries in this regard can be made at a court registry.
7	Court Lists	Unrestricted access.



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8	Court Orders	Unrestricted access (except wire-tap orders, but including orders making reference to the <i>Sex Offender Information Registration Act</i>).
9	Criminal Record of the Accused	Access only to Crown counsel, defence counsel, accused and probation officer concerned with the case. For absolute or conditional discharges, there is no access after one and three years respectively, from the date of sentencing. After the accused is record suspended/pardoned, there is no access to information regarding the offence for which they were record suspended/pardoned. However, a procedure is available for record suspended/pardoned offenders to obtain access to their own record suspended/pardoned court file. Inquiries in this regard can be made at a court registry. Where the criminal record of the accused has been entered as an exhibit, see 10 below.
10	Exhibits	Access only to Crown counsel, defence counsel, and accused, unless otherwise ordered by the Court upon application. If an order is granted providing access for viewing an exhibit, the viewing shall only occur under the supervision of registry personnel. The need for an application for access by the public to exhibits in a criminal proceeding is based on the need, established by the law, to consider the competing interests in respect of public access, distribution and broadcast of court exhibits. Requests for access should be made to the presiding Judge (if the case is pending or ongoing) or to the Regional Administrative Judge (if there is no judge seized of the matter) of the Court in the location where the proceedings are or were held. When counsel files a Notice of Appeal they will have the same access rights as counsel of record in the Provincial Court.
11	Information (including Ticket Informations and Certified Extracts of Tickets)	Unrestricted access. However, no access to private informations unless otherwise ordered by Court.
12	Judges' Bench Books	No access.
13	Letters of Reference and	Unrestricted access.



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Other Correspondence not filed as Exhibits		
14	Medical Report (including psychiatric report) relating to an accused	Access only to Crown counsel, accused, defence counsel and the probation officer assigned to the matter, unless otherwise ordered by Court.
15	Pardon	No access to court file after a record suspension/pardon has been granted. However, a procedure is available for record suspended/pardoned offenders to obtain access to their own record suspended/pardoned court file. Inquiries in this regard can be made at a court registry.
16a	Presentence / Probation Report	Access only to Crown counsel, defence counsel, accused, and the probation officer assigned to the matter, unless otherwise ordered by Court.
16b	Gladue Report	No access unless otherwise ordered by Court.
17	Pre-Trial Conference Records (CRIM 12 Practice Direction)	Access only to Crown counsel, defence counsel, and accused to Pre-Trial Conference Report and Form 2, unless otherwise ordered by the Court.
18a	Production Orders to Third Parties (Sexual Offences)	<p>For trials of sexual offences, an accused person may apply to the trial judge for an order requiring a third party to bring to court confidential records concerning the complainant or witness such as medical, psychiatric and education records.</p> <p>Under ss. 278.4 and 278.6 of the Criminal Code the application proceedings are heard <i>in camera</i> (in a closed courtroom) with the public excluded. As a result, there is no public access to the documents filed in relation to the application or the hearing.</p> <p>Section 278.9 also imposes, depending on the circumstances, various publication bans in relation to the documents, evidence, and the judge's determination and reasons.</p>
18b	Production Orders under	Members of the public, including the media, can inspect production orders under ss. 487.014-487.018 of the



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<p>ss. 487.014-487.018 of the <i>Criminal Code</i></p>	<p><i>Criminal Code</i> and their Informations if all of the following conditions are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The production order has been executed;• Documents or data have been produced;• There are no sealing orders or non-disclosure orders under s. 487.0191 in force;• The offence alleged was not committed by a young person. <p>If a production order has been executed and nothing is produced, inspection of the production order and information on which the production order was issued can only be made by the holder of the documents or data (upon presentation of identification and authorization confirming authorized representative of holder), accused person, or his/her counsel and Crown counsel if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are no sealing orders in force or non-disclosure orders under s. 487.0191 in force;• The offence alleged was not committed by a young person. <p>Sealing orders. After a request for a sealing order has been approved, a copy of the sealing order will be accessible to the accused person, defence counsel, the holder of the documents or data, Crown counsel, and members of the public, including the media. For access to other records, including the production order and the information on which it was issued, any person must submit an Application to a Judge.</p> <p>Public access file. Where, in accordance with this policy, a judicial officer has determined that production order documents are available for public inspection, photocopies will be made and placed in a public access file immediately after the determination. In cases of lengthy Informations, the first page(s) only may be placed in the public access file and a complete copy made on request. In the situation where multiple production orders were issued from one Information, all production orders must meet the criteria before any of the copies are placed in the public access file.</p>
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		<p>A public access file will be maintained for copies of production order documents (after a production has taken place and all other applicable access provisions have been met) and copies of sealing orders, after a judicial officer has determined that production order documents are available for public inspection. The public access file will be arranged in chronological order and will include photocopies of documents available to the public.</p> <p>Members of the public have open access to the entire public access file and do not have to request specific cases.</p>
19	Reasons for Judgment	Unrestricted access, subject to a ban on publication (see 5 above and 23 below).
20	Record of Proceedings, Case History Card or Calendar Card, Adjournment Minute Sheet	Unrestricted access, unless in-camera or <i>voir dire</i> proceedings, then restricted to the accused, defence counsel and Crown counsel.
21	Recording Log notes (Clerk/Recorder's notes)	If a person is permitted to receive a copy of an audio CD or audio via File Transfer Protocol (FTP) in accordance with the DARS policy below, that person is also entitled to receive the Log Notes accompanying that proceeding.
22	Recording of Proceedings	See reference to Section 6 - Digital Audio Recording System.
23	Report to Crown Counsel / Circumstances Sheet	Access only to Crown counsel. (Note: With the exception of the court administrator's copy of the first page, containing the accused's name, date of birth and address, these reports should not be located in registry files.)
24	Search Warrants (see 18b above for Production Orders under ss. 487.014-487.018 of the Criminal Code)	Members of the public, including the media, can inspect search warrants, their Informations, the Form 5.2 Report to a Justice, and documents created or filed under s. 490 of the <i>Criminal Code</i> (such as applications and orders for further detention of things seized) if all of the following conditions are met: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The search warrant has been executed;• Something has been seized as demonstrated by submission of a Report to a Justice (Form 5.2) or the things seized have been brought before a Justice of the Peace;



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are no sealing orders in force (a sealing order may be in force if, for example, a claim for solicitor client privilege is granted);• The offence alleged was not committed by a young person.
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After a search warrant has been executed and nothing is seized, inspection of the warrant and information on which the warrant was issued can only be made by the householder (upon presentation of identification confirming residency at the searched location), accused person, or their counsel and Crown counsel if:

- There are no sealing orders in force (a sealing order may be in force if, for example, a claim for solicitor client privilege is granted);
- The offence alleged was not committed by a young person.

Sealing orders. After a request for a sealing order has been approved, a copy of the sealing order will be accessible to the accused person, defence counsel, the householder, Crown counsel, and members of the public, including the media. For access to other records, including the warrant, the information on which it was issued, the Form 5.2, and documents created or filed under s. 490, any person must submit an Application to a Judge.

Public access file. Where, in accordance with this policy, a judicial officer has determined that search warrant documents are available for public inspection, photocopies will be made and placed in public access files immediately after the determination. In cases of lengthy Informations, the first page(s) only may be placed in the public access file and a complete copy made on request. In the situation where multiple warrants were issued from one Information, all search warrants must meet the criteria before any of the copies are placed in the public access file.

A public access file will be maintained for copies of search documents (after a search and seizure has taken place and all other applicable access provisions have been met) and copies of sealing orders, after a judicial officer has determined that search warrant documents are available

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		<p>for public inspection. The public access file will be arranged in chronological order and will include photocopies of documents available to the public.</p> <p>Members of the public have open access to the entire public access file and do not have to request specific cases.</p> <p>Seizures without a warrant. If things are seized without a warrant, members of the public, including the media, can inspect the Form 5.2 Report to a Justice and documents created or filed under s. 490 of the <i>Criminal Code</i> if all of the following conditions are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are no sealing orders in force (a sealing order may be in force if, for example, a claim for solicitor client privilege is granted);• The offence alleged was not committed by a young person. <p>If a sealing order is made in relation to a warrantless seizure, a copy of the sealing order is accessible to any person. For access to other records, including the Form 5.2 and any documents created or filed under s. 490, any person must submit an Application to a Judge.</p>
25	Summons	Unrestricted access.
26	Transcripts	<p>Access to the court's copy of the transcript only to Crown counsel, defence counsel and the accused. Copies of the transcript, unless restricted by order of the court, can be purchased. However, in cases where a publication ban is in place, the purchaser must first obtain a court order allowing access to the transcript. In addition to any terms of access or editing ordered by the court in considering that application, transcripts in cases where there is a publication ban in place must be marked as being subject to a ban.</p> <p>When transcripts are sought by Corrections Canada or the BC Parole Board and a publication ban is in place, they do not require a court order for access, but the transcripts so provided to Corrections Canada or the B.C. Parole Board must be marked and accompanied by a standard form letter describing the ban.</p>



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27	Victim Impact Statements	Access only to Crown counsel, accused, defence counsel, the victim and to Corrections officials who require access for preparation of presentence reports or parole hearings, unless otherwise ordered by Court.
28	Warrants to/for Arrest	Unrestricted access.

2. Access to Court Records for Youth Court Matters

2.1 The *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (YCJA) contains both a publication ban and a ban on disclosure of information contained in a record that would identify a young person dealt with under the Act (s. 118). That section provides as follows:

Except as authorized or required by this Act, no person shall be given access to a record kept under sections 114 [court records] to 116, and no information contained in it may be given to any person, where to do so would identify the young person to whom it relates as a young person dealt with under this Act.

Section 118 and certain other sections in Part 6 (Publication, Records and Information) of the YCJA also apply to proceedings respecting provincial offences alleged to have been committed by a young person, pursuant to s. 4(1) of the British Columbia *Youth Justice Act*.

2.2 In light of s. 118 and a purpose of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* in protecting the privacy of young persons who fall within its provisions, Court registries will not provide public access to a youth court file other than to provide, when requested, the court file number for an individual, the next appearance date for the individual, and the custody status of the individual. Subject to the restrictions contained in the YCJA to protect the privacy of young persons, this policy, of course, does not limit the ability of members of the public and the media to attend open court proceedings in relation to youth matters.

2.3 As an exception, s. 119(1) of the YCJA contains a list of people who are entitled to receive court records for a specific period. The media and the general public have no right of access to these files but may apply to the Court for access to the information. A judge may grant access to information under the YCJA if she or he is satisfied that the person seeking access has a valid interest in the record and that access to the record is desirable in the interest of the proper administration of justice (s. 119(1)(s)(ii)). Even if a person is granted access to information under such an order, that person cannot further disclose the information unless authorized under s. 129. There are also time restrictions for access provided under s. 119(1) (see s. 119(2)).



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2.4 The provisions of the YCJA restricting access to records do not apply to records relating to an offence for which an adult sentence was imposed if all appeals are completed and the result is still that an adult sentence is imposed (s. 117).

3. Access to Court Records for Family Matters

3.1 Rule 174(1) of the *Provincial Court Family Rules* provides that unless the court otherwise orders, only the following persons may search a court file under the Rules: a party to the court file; a lawyer, whether or not the lawyer represents a party, and including a lawyer for a child; a family justice counsellor; a person authorized by a judge; a person authorized in writing by a party to the court file or by the party's lawyer.

3.2 Despite para. 3.1 above, Rule 174(2) of the *Provincial Court Family Rules* provides that unless the court otherwise orders, any person may access the following information about a family case: the names of the parties as identified in the case; the case file number; the registry at which the court file is located; and the date the case was started.

3.3 Rule 8(15) of the *Provincial Court (Child, Family and Community Service Act) Rules* [BC Reg. 533/95] provides that, unless a judge orders otherwise, only the following may search a registry file respecting a matter under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*: a party; a party's lawyer of record; a person authorized in writing by a party or by a party's lawyer of record; for the purpose of determining whether an application in Form 3.1 has been filed, the director responsible for service under Rule 6(6.1)(b), or section 50.02(2) of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*, or the director's lawyer.

3.4 Rule 9(14) of the *Provincial Court (Adult Guardianship) Rules* [BC Reg. 30/2001], provides that only the following are entitled to search a registry file respecting a matter under the *Adult Guardianship Act*: a party, a party's lawyer, or a person authorized by a party, by a party's lawyer or by a judge.

3.5 Except as provided for in paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 above, court registries will not provide public access to a court file respecting a matter under either the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* or the *Adult Guardianship Act* other than to provide, when requested, the court file number and location for that court file, unless otherwise ordered by the Court.

3.6 Regarding publication of matters that occur in family proceedings, section 3(6) of the *Provincial Court Act* provides as follows:

In relation to family or children's matters before the court, a person must not publish at any time anything that would reasonably be likely to disclose to members of the public the identity of the child or party.



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4. Access to Court Records for Civil Small Claims Matters

4.1 Only the following persons may search a court file or order a transcript under the *Intimate Images Protection Act*: a party to the court file or their lawyer; or, a person authorized by a judge.

4.2 For all other civil small claims matters, members of the public may have access to:

- a. the court file at the registry where the case is being heard;
- b. specific court documents through Court Services Online (these documents include the Notice of Claim, Reply and Orders);
- c. case information through Court Services Online or at a public inquiry terminal at the registry where the case is being heard.

4.3 As with all information in a court record, access to exhibits is subject to the supervision of the courts and must be balanced against competing rights such as privacy interests. There is no automatic right of the public and media to access exhibits in Small Claims matters, many of which are confidential and filed by the parties under compulsion by reason of production and disclosure orders. Access may be sought by application to the Presiding Judge or to the Regional Administrative Judge (if there is no judge seized of the matter) of the Court in the location where the proceedings are or were held.

5. Sealed Files

5.1 No one may have access to a sealed court record or a sealed document within the court record unless the court makes an order allowing access.

6. Access to Digital Audio Recordings (DARS) of Proceedings

6.1 Proceedings in the Provincial Court are recorded by a Digital Audio Recording System (DARS). The following sections discuss listening to and obtaining copies of audio recordings.

Access Rules of General Application

6.2 Access by way of a copy, or by listening at a court registry, is only granted when ordered by the presiding Judge or presiding Judicial Justice (JJ) or, in that Judge's or JJ's absence, the Regional Administrative Judge or Administrative JJ, as the case may be, or a Judge or JJ assigned by the Regional Administrative Judge or Administrative JJ, as the case may be. This policy applies to the following:

6.2.1 In-camera proceedings



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6.2.2 Sealed files

6.2.3 Record Suspended/Pardoned files

6.2.4 YCJA proceedings

6.2.4.1 The young person, their counsel and Crown counsel may listen to the audio recording at the court registry unless the proceedings were sealed.

6.2.5 Publication bans (ban on publishing, broadcasting, transmitting)

6.2.5.1 However, a person who was present or was entitled to be present in the courtroom for a proceeding covered by a publication ban is entitled to listen to the audio recording by attending at the court registry unless the proceedings were sealed.

6.2.5.2 However, at this time, counsel of record are entitled to listen to the audio recording of adult criminal matters covered by a publication ban by way of a copy of the audio recording (see s. 6.3).

6.2.5.3 Anyone listening to the audio recording of a proceeding is required to abide by the terms of any publication ban which may be in place. Although registry staff will try to notify the person wishing to listen to the audio recording of a proceeding of any publication bans or restrictions that may apply and will advise that publication, broadcast or transmission of the information contained in the court record could be an offence at law, it is the responsibility of the person who is listening to the audio recording to identify any publication bans or restrictions that may apply, and to comply with them. Failure to comply with the publication ban may result in serious sanctions including contempt of court proceedings.

6.2.6 Oral judgments and rulings

6.2.6.1 However, a person who was present or was entitled to be present in the courtroom when oral reasons for judgment were given is entitled to listen to the audio recording of oral reasons for judgment by attending at the court registry unless the proceedings were sealed.

6.2.6.2 However, at this time, counsel of record and accredited media are entitled to listen to the audio recording of oral reasons for judgment for adult criminal matters by way of a copy of the audio recording (see s. 6.3).

6.2.6.3 The audio recording of oral reasons for judgment may not be the final version of the reasons for judgment. In the event a transcript of oral reasons for judgment is ordered, the draft will be provided to the judge to review and edit. The oral reasons for judgment are not final until they have been transcribed, edited and signed by the judicial officer who gave them.

6.2.7 Settlement conferences/case conferences



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6.2.8 Audio recording of courtroom before or after court is in session.

Access Rules for Specific Types of Cases

6.3 Criminal Proceedings and Traffic Court Proceedings

	Who is requesting access?	On what basis may a copy of recording be accessed?
1	Accused	Only upon an order from the presiding Judge/JJ [or in that Judge's/JJ's absence, the Regional Administrative Judge/Administrative JJ or Judge/JJ assigned by the Regional Administrative Judge/Administrative JJ]. Any order should include the terms in the Access Order attached as Appendix B .
2	Counsel of record	On providing an electronic undertaking using their digital credential or an undertaking in the form attached as Appendix A . The undertaking includes conditions that restrict the use of the copy and prohibit any further distribution of it.
3	Other lawyer	By providing a letter of authorization from the accused or counsel of record authorizing the lawyer to obtain a copy of the audio recording, and on providing an undertaking in the form attached as Appendix A . The undertaking includes conditions that restrict the use of the copy and prohibit any further distribution of it.
4	Accredited journalists	Accredited journalists must provide an undertaking and receive a desk order from a Court Services Justice of the Peace (CSJP), with terms that prohibit release of the copy to a third party, or its broadcast, transmission or reproduction in any way, including placement on the internet. In addition, there must be a term that requires the journalist to keep the copy secure and to return the copy to the registry/destroy the recording when it is no longer required. See NM 01 regarding access by FTP.
5	Any other access	Access to a copy must be by court order by the presiding Judge/JJ or, in that Judge's/JJ's absence, the Regional Administrative Judge/Administrative JJ, or Judge/JJ assigned by the Regional Administrative Judge/Administrative JJ. Any order should include the terms in the Access Order attached as Appendix B .



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	However, if a court registry is equipped for public listening, parties, counsel, members of the legal profession, accredited journalists, and all members of the public, including journalists who are not accredited, can use the public listening facilities to listen to a recording. If the registry is not equipped for public listening, listening will only be permitted if ordered by the Court.
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6.4 Family proceedings (FLA, CFCSA, etc.)

	Who is requesting access?	On what basis may a copy of recording be accessed?
1	Parties (or a person authorized in writing by a party or authorized in writing by counsel for a party)	Only upon an order from the presiding Judge [or in that Judge's absence, the Regional Administrative Judge or Judge assigned by the Regional Administrative Judge]. Any order should include the terms in the Access Order attached as Appendix B .
2	Counsel of record	On providing an undertaking in the form attached as Appendix A . The undertaking includes conditions that restrict the use of the copy and prohibit any further distribution of it.
3	Lawyer for child (under Rule 162 of the Provincial Court Family Rules)	On providing an undertaking in the form attached as Appendix A . The undertaking includes conditions that restrict the use of the copy and prohibit any further distribution of it.
4	Other lawyer	By providing a letter of authorization from a party or counsel of record authorizing the lawyer to obtain a copy of the audio recording, and on providing an undertaking in the form attached as Appendix A . The undertaking includes conditions that restrict the use of the copy and prohibit any further distribution of it.
5	Any other access	Access to a copy must be by court order by the presiding Judge or, in that Judge's absence, the Regional Administrative Judge, or Judge assigned by the Regional Administrative Judge. Any order should include the terms in the Access Order attached as Appendix B . However, if a court registry is equipped for public listening, parties or counsel for a party can listen at that facility. If the registry is not equipped for public listening, listening will only be permitted if ordered by the Court.



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6.5 Civil (Small Claims) Proceedings

	Who is requesting access?	On what basis may a copy of recording be accessed?
1	Parties	Only upon an order from the presiding Judge [or in that Judge's absence, the Regional Administrative Judge or Judge assigned by the Regional Administrative Judge]. Any order should include the terms in the Access Order attached in Appendix B .
2	Counsel of record	On providing an undertaking in the form attached as Appendix A . The undertaking includes conditions that restrict the use of the copy and prohibit any further distribution of it.
3	Other lawyer	By providing a letter of authorization from a party or counsel of record authorizing the lawyer to obtain a copy of the audio recording, and on providing an undertaking in the form attached as Appendix A . The undertaking includes conditions that restrict the use of the copy and prohibit any further distribution of it.
4	Accredited journalists	Accredited journalists must provide an undertaking and receive a desk order from a CSJP with terms that prohibit release of the copy to a third party, or its broadcast, transmission or reproduction in any way, including placement on the internet. In addition, there must be a term that requires the journalist to keep the copy secure and to return the copy to the registry/destroy the recording when it is no longer required. See NM 01 regarding access by FTP.
5	Any other access	Access to a copy must be by court order by the presiding Judge or, in that Judge's absence, the Regional Administrative Judge, or Judge assigned by the Regional Administrative Judge. Any Order should include the terms in the Access Order attached as Appendix B . However, if a court registry is equipped for public listening, parties, counsel, members of the legal profession, accredited journalists, and all members of the public, including journalists who are not accredited, can use the public listening facilities to listen to a recording. If the registry is not equipped for public listening, public listening will only be permitted if ordered by the Court.



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APPENDIX A

(This form is available from the Ministry of Attorney General [website](#).)

UNDERTAKING OF COUNSEL

(Copy of Digital Audio Recording)

In the Provincial Court of British Columbia
 In the Supreme Court of British Columbia

Court File Number:
Style of cause:
Court Location:
Date:

1) I, Print counsel's name, acknowledge that:

- I am a lawyer in good standing with the Law Society of British Columbia, or a visiting lawyer authorized to practice law in British Columbia pursuant to s. 15(1)(e) of the *Legal Profession Act*;
- the copy of the digital audio recording ("DARS") is being provided to me solely for the purpose of
describe the specific activity that release of the copy is intended to facilitate – e.g. "to review the evidence of the witness in the case of R. v. X; or in order to prepare the case including cross examination(s) in the proceeding Y. v. Z." etc.

and that

- any other use of the DARS is prohibited.

2) I undertake that I will not:

- copy, store or transfer the DARS or any portion of it to any device except as may be done by the software or operating system incidental to reviewing the contents, and such review shall only be carried out on computer equipment and peripheral devices belonging to my firm or employer, to me or to a person identified in paragraph 3 of this undertaking;
- upload the DARS or any portion of it to the Internet or otherwise make the DARS or any portion of it available through any medium save and except as permitted by the terms of this undertaking;
- distribute the DARS or any portion of it in any way save and except as permitted by the terms of this undertaking;
- use the DARS for the preparation of an official transcript of the proceedings; however, I may direct my administrative staff to prepare an unofficial transcript to be used for internal purposes. For the purpose of this undertaking, an official transcript is a transcript prepared by an authorized reporter pursuant to the *Official Reporters (Supreme Court) Regulation*, BC Reg 227/2021; and
- distribute or disseminate an unofficial transcript of the proceedings beyond the individuals authorized to access the DARS in this undertaking. For the purposes of this undertaking, distribution or dissemination does not include relying on an unofficial transcript prepared from the DARS to make submissions or including brief quotations from an unofficial transcript in written submissions, provided that its origin in an unofficial transcription is made clear to the Court;
- attach an unofficial transcript to an affidavit prepared for any court proceeding; or
- allow any of these things to be done by anyone else.

3) Except as otherwise provided by this undertaking, I undertake to not allow anyone to access the DARS except those individuals enumerated in this paragraph and that where such individuals are accessing the DARS, I will provide such individuals with a copy of this undertaking:

- other lawyers, articled students or administrative staff members within my law firm, office or who are employed by my employer, and who are assisting me in this matter;
- Name an expert witness. For the purpose of this undertaking, an expert witness is a person who has been retained by a party or ordered by the Court to provide opinion evidence in a proceeding; or
- Name a witness (e.g. police witness or civilian witness who are listening to their own evidence).

4) I may, after providing a copy of this undertaking, allow in my presence or in the presence of an individual identified in paragraph 3(a),

- an accused in a criminal proceeding who is my client to listen to that portion of the DARS and to read an unofficial transcript of that portion of the proceedings for which the accused was present or was entitled to be present either in person or by some other means;
- a person who is a party in a civil proceeding (including a family proceeding) who is my client to listen to that portion of the DARS and to read an unofficial transcript of that portion of the proceedings for which my client was present or was entitled to be present either

UNDERTAKING OF COUNSEL - DARS



Policy of the Provincial Court of British Columbia

UNDERTAKING OF COUNSEL

(Copy of Digital Audio Recording)

- In the Provincial Court of British Columbia
- In the Supreme Court of British Columbia

Court File Number:
Style of cause:
Court Location:
Date:

in person or by some other means; and	
c. a witness in any proceeding to listen to and, to read an unofficial transcript of, the portion of the DARS which contains the witness' own evidence.	
5) I may, after providing a copy of this undertaking, allow an expert witness to listen to that portion of the DARS and to read that portion of an unofficial transcript of the proceedings which relates to the opinion that the expert witness will be providing in the proceeding.	
6) Other than as provided by paragraphs 3-5, I undertake that I will not provide the DARS or an unofficial transcript of the DARS to anyone without first obtaining a court order authorizing such dissemination.	
7) When the DARS or an unofficial transcript is not being used for the purpose permitted by this undertaking, I undertake that I will keep the DARS and any unofficial transcript(s) in a secure place where neither can be accessed by persons other than those who are authorized to access the DARS or the unofficial transcript.	
8) I undertake to delete and/or destroy the DARS on or before: <small>Insert here either the last currently scheduled court or chambers date for the proceeding, or another specified date</small>	
9) I undertake that if I require the DARS beyond the date specified, I will provide a new undertaking to the issuing registry prior to expiry of the date specified in this undertaking.	

Law Society Number:	Telephone Number:
Business Address:	Print Name:
Signature: 	
Dated:	

UNDERTAKING OF COUNSEL - DARS



Policy of the Provincial Court of British Columbia

APPENDIX B

(This form is available from the Ministry of Attorney General [website](#).)

ACCESS ORDER

(Copy of Digital Audio Recording)
In the Provincial Court of British Columbia

Court File Number:
Style of cause:
Court Location:
Date:

1) The applicant, <small>Print name</small>	
(a) acknowledges that the copy of the Digital Audio Recording ("DARS") for the above proceedings heard on _____ in courtroom _____ before _____ is being provided solely for the purpose of, _____	
describe the specific activity that release of the copy is intended to facilitate – e.g. "to review the evidence of a witness in the case of R. v. X; in order to prepare the case including cross examination(s) in the proceeding Y. v. Z." etc.	
and;	
(b) any other use of the DARS is prohibited.	
2) The applicant must not:	
a. copy, store or transfer the DARS or any portion of it to any device except as may be done by the software or operating system incidental to reviewing the contents, and such review shall only be carried out on computer equipment and peripheral devices belonging to the applicant;	
b. upload the DARS or any portion of it to the Internet or otherwise make the DARS or any portion of it available through any medium;	
c. distribute the DARS or any portion of it in any way; or	
d. allow any of these things to be done by anyone else.	
3) The applicant must not provide access to the DARS or any portion of it to anyone else.	
4) When the DARS is not being used for the purpose permitted by this order, the applicant must keep the DARS in a secure place where it cannot be accessed by anyone except pursuant to the terms of this order.	
5) The applicant must delete, destroy or return the DARS to the court registry that issued it on or before:	
<small>Insert here either the last currently scheduled court or chambers date for the proceeding, or another specified date</small>	
6) If the applicant requires the DARS beyond the date specified, the applicant must bring a further application to the court for an order extending the time that the applicant may retain the DARS before it must be deleted, destroyed or returned to the court registry.	
<small>PRINT NAME</small>	
Signature:	<small>Print name</small>
Judge:	<small>Print name</small>
Dated:	

ACCESS ORDER - DARS



Policy of the Provincial Court of British Columbia

Contact:

Legal Officer

Policy History:

Approved by: Governance Committee

History of Revisions:

- January 29, 2014: Reformats but does not change content of Section 3 of "Policies Regarding Public and Media Access in the Provincial Court of British Columbia" February 2011, updated October 2011, and November 2012
- February 21, 2014: Inserted 'record suspensions' to references of 'pardoned' files or offenders as a result of changes to the *Criminal Records Act* which changed the term 'pardon' to 'record suspension' (applications processed and approved prior to March 12, 2012 are still referred to as 'pardons')
- May 2014: Changed "Administrative Judge" to "Regional Administrative Judge" and "Judicial Justice of the Peace" to "Judicial Justice"
- November 2015: Changed "registry file" to "court file", "*Family Relations Act*" to "*Family Law Act*", "agreement filed under section 121 of that *Act*" to "filed agreement", and "party's lawyer" to "a lawyer (whether or not a lawyer of a party)", and added "a person authorized in writing by a party or a party's lawyer" in section 3.1; changed "*FRA*" to "*FLA*" in section 6.4
- January 2018: Changed section 1(12) to reflect no access to judges' bench books and section 6 to reflect the updated DARS Access Order and Counsel Undertaking
- June 18, 2018: Added second paragraph under "Purpose of Policy" following comments in *R. v. Backer, 2018 BCPC 72*, paragraph 15.
- June 28, 2019: Deleted words "is not a court registry and" in section 5.2.
- December 10, 2019: Section 1.3 Chart updated as follows: #5 - section 276.3(1) repealed and replaced 278.95; #10 - to provide that when counsel files a Notice of Appeal they will have the same access rights to exhibits as counsel of record in the Provincial Court; #14 - to clarify that section is about a medical report relating to an accused; #17 – to add a section regarding production orders to third parties (sexual offences); and, #20 - to include cases where solicitor-client privilege is granted as an example of when a sealing order may be in force. Sections 3.3 (access to family court file number and location) and 5 (sealed files) added.
- September 25, 2020: Sections 1 (#20) and 6 updated to include reference to File Transfer Protocol (FTP) for accredited journalists.
- December 4, 2020: Section 1 updated to add #17b regarding production orders under ss. 487.014-487.018 of the *Criminal Code*.
- May 17, 2021: Rule reference in section 3.1 amended and in section 6.4 "lawyer for child" added to be consistent with the new *Provincial Court Family Rules* that came into force May 17, 2021.
- June 04, 2021: Updated section 3 to be consistent with Rule 174(2) of the *Provincial Court Family Rules*.
- December 19, 2022: Updated section 3 to be consistent with Rule 8(15) of the *Provincial Court (CFCSA) Rules*.



Policy of the Provincial Court of British Columbia

- February 10, 2023: Updated section 1 (#4) to add “release order”, updated section 1 (#17b and 23) to clarify access where sealing order granted and to warrantless seizures, and updated section 2 to clarify application to youth court matters for provincial offences.
- May 15, 2023: Updates “Purpose”; clarifies section 1 by adding no access to private informations (#11) or Gladue Reports (#16b) unless otherwise ordered by Court; adds #17 to section 1 re access to pre-trial conference records under CRIM 12 Practice Direction; updates ss. 6.2.5.2 and 6.2.6.3; adds ss. 6.2.5.3 and 6.2.6.2; and changes references from type of copy of DARS to copy of DARS in s. 6 and consequential updates to Appendices “A” and “B”.
- January 15, 2024: Updated section 3.3 to be consistent with Rule 8(15) of the *Provincial Court (CFCSA) Rules*.
- January 29, 2024: Updated section 4 (*Access to Court Records for Civil Small Claims Matters*) to add new section 4.1 referencing the *Intimate Images Protection Act*; and to revise the numbering and streamline section 4.2.
- June 26, 2024: Updated section 4.1 to add “or order a transcript under”.

Expired January 2026