

Leveraging Check-In, Queuing, and Wayfinding Technology to Provide Better Access to Court Services

· C O U R T · H O U S E ·



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Introduction

Check-in, queuing, and wayfinding technologies are transforming the way people navigate courthouses and access court services. Courts may enhance the administration of justice and improve user experience by automating check-in processes, digitizing wayfinding, signage, and queue management systems, and providing supplemental methods for court users to access information. Leveraging these technologies can increase the efficiency and productivity of court procedures, improve public confidence, create a more user-friendly and accessible environment, and offer visitors a better experience.

For the purpose of this document, check-in, queuing, and wayfinding technology refer to software or equipment that organizes and improves access to court services and the process of managing movement within a courthouse. Many people are familiar with automated technology within public spaces such as health clinics, grocery stores, and airports: people use wayfinding monitors in airports to locate their flights and gate numbers, self-service kiosks in grocery stores to avoid standing in long lines, check-in kiosks at hotels for faster service, ticket dispensers for queue management at the deli, and online scheduling software to book appointments of all kinds. Courts are using these same types of technologies to automate their processes and offer better service to court users.

This document discusses best practices for utilizing these tools to help visitors move through the courthouse and feel more confident navigating the court system and accessing services. Examples of courts using these resources are highlighted along with potential benefits and challenges. Guidance and recommendations are discussed to offer considerations for courts interested in upgrading existing systems or implementing new technology.

Benefits

Increase Staff Productivity

High-volume dockets can lead to challenges in maintaining staff productivity. This is particularly difficult as courts continue to experience staff shortages,¹ and court users in those dockets may require accommodations or extra help navigating a process.² Providing various sources to check-in, obtain case information, forms, and directions can allow court users to navigate the system independently and may give staff more time to attend to other tasks and focus on people who need special assistance. Even if these tools do not allow for a completely autonomous system navigation, they can still enable court users to ask better questions and have a better baseline understanding of their next steps. For example, several district courts have implemented kiosks for jurors to expedite the check-in process.³ Jurors scan their summons letters and fill out any other required information that is then uploaded directly into the Jury Management System. This check-in technology saves staff from having to manually check-in all jurors and can offer jurors a faster check-in experience. Staff are available to assist jurors with the kiosks if necessary, or manually check-in jurors who require additional help.

Improve Public Trust and Confidence in the Courts

Public confidence in state courts has been declining for the past several years. The National Center for State Courts' (NCSC) 2023 State of the State Courts national survey found that 47 percent of respondents felt that courts are not doing enough to empower regular people to navigate the court system without an attorney, and 43 percent are calling for courts to adopt new technologies.⁴ Navigating court can be overwhelming and confusing for court users who are often in a vulnerable state or lack legal representation.⁵ Improving efficiency and transparency in the courts can increase public trust and confidence in the system.⁶ When courts create an environment which is user friendly for all visitors, that communicates what users can expect when navigating the court system, and that provides resources to help them, it can increase trust and confidence in the court system.

Courts can use the various technology tools discussed in this paper to improve the way they communicate with the public about court procedures and services to increase engagement and

¹ C. Campbell, J. Holtzclaw, and D. Alicea-Lozada, eds. *Trends in State Courts 2021*. National Center for State Courts. 2021 <https://perma.cc/9X6Q-ZKLY>

² *Problems and Recommendations for High Volume Dockets: Appendix I*. Civil Justice Improvements Committee. <https://perma.cc/8S3C-J2NF>

³ *Federal Courts Using Technology to Improve Juror Experience*. United States Courts. May 5, 2017. <https://perma.cc/TP4H-ZTMR>

⁴ *2023 State of State Courts – National Survey Analysis*. National Center for State Courts. 2023. <https://perma.cc/H8L5-Q38H>

⁵ Access to Justice Team. *The Things we Think and Do Not Always Say*. National Center for State Courts. March 2024. <https://perma.cc/9EBR-XXWF>

⁶ T. Bates, M. Dietrich, N. Mansfield. *Designing and Implementing Court Automation Projects: Practical Guidance for USAID DRG Officers*. U.S. Agency for International Development. August 2019. <https://perma.cc/UY7L-TPW6>

trust, better preparing court users for what to expect. Wayfinding and self-help technologies can help court users understand how to navigate the court system and where to access essential information. Accessible electronic docket displays and digital signage are relatively simple technologies that can be implemented to provide court users with appropriate, timely, and accurate information. For example, the **Fulton County, GA** courts have implemented a comprehensive

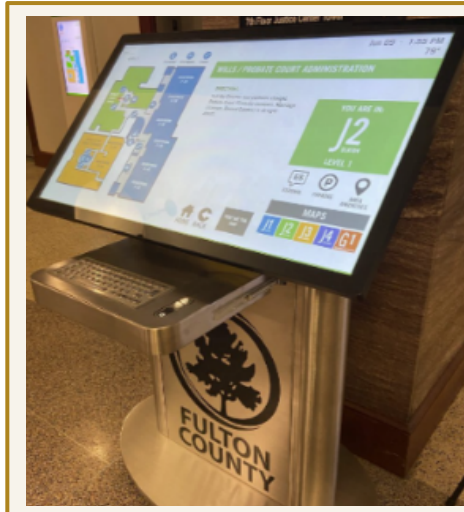


Figure 1. Fulton County, GA Courts Wayfinding Kiosk

Wayfinding a Courthouse: Fulton County, GA. Selbert Perkins Design.

<https://perma.cc/7AZ4-PDRG>

wayfinding technology to help visitors find their way to their destinations, including color-coding systems, interactive touch screen kiosks, digital signage, and monitors.⁷

Increase Access to Justice

“When access for all has been achieved, everyone will have the information and assistance they need to address civil legal needs, when and where they need it, and in a format that they can use.”⁸ Courts have an obligation to provide access to services for all members of the public, regardless of their circumstance. The tools and methods mentioned in this document explain how courts can enhance the public’s access to justice. Accommodations required through The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and language accommodations that may be difficult for courts to provide through existing processes may be more attainable through these types of technology tools and solutions.

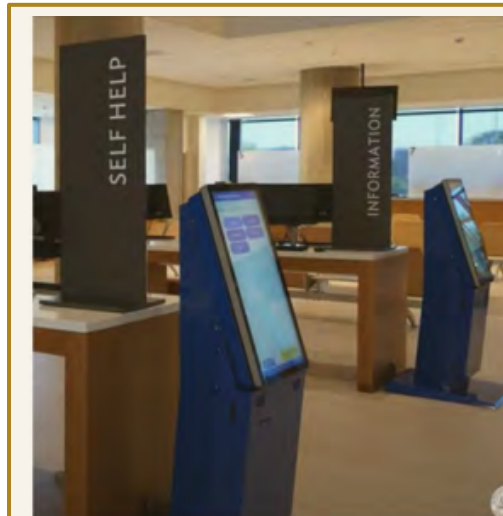


Figure 2. A picture of Multnomah County, OR Courthouse’s self-help kiosk in their customer service area.

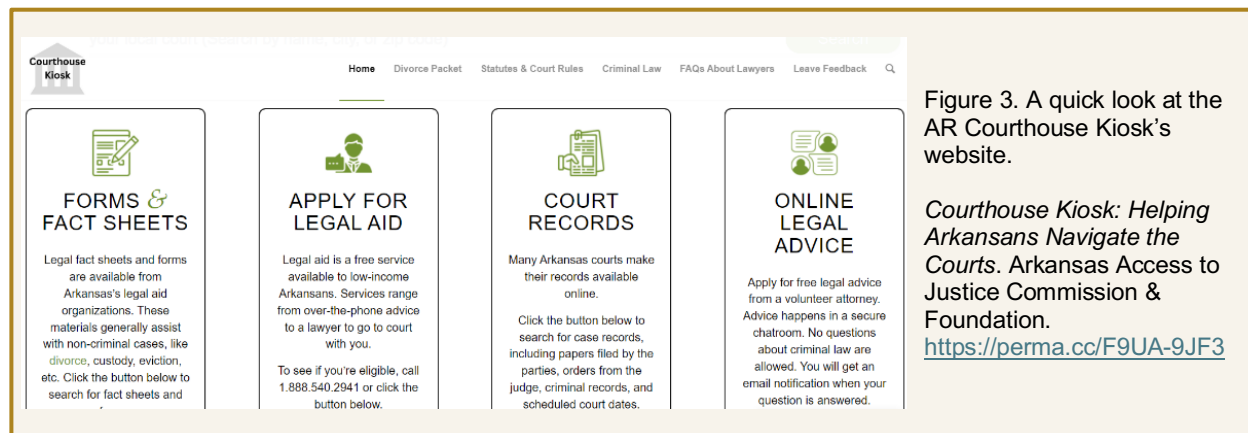
Building a Court for the 21st Century. Oregon Judicial Department. Oregon Judicial Department, Multnomah County Court, September 2020. <https://perma.cc/2DZP-64J7>

⁷ *Wayfinding a Courthouse: Fulton County, GA.* Selbert Perkins Design. <https://perma.cc/7AZ4-PDRG>

⁸ Access to Justice Team. *The Things we Think and Do Not Always Say.* National Center for State Courts. March 2024. <https://perma.cc/62FU-PLTY>

Court processes should include step-by-step guides to explain how things work, and information should be available through multiple sources and formats provided in the different languages spoken in the community.⁹ Courts can, for example, use digital software to offer information in different languages, something that is more challenging to do via paper resources. **Multnomah County, OR Courthouse’s** self-help kiosks and terminals include interfaces in multiple languages and accommodations for sight-impaired individuals.¹⁰

Services should be offered both on-site and virtually, when possible, to accommodate a greater number of community members. Video explainers are online tools that can be used to communicate court services and processes in a comprehensive manner and can be accessed electronically. NCSC’s Access to Justice team offers several such [videos](#) on our website, which courts can use freely.¹¹ Arkansas statewide program, AR Courthouse Kiosk, is an example of courts working to increase access to justice using kiosks.¹² These kiosks enable the public to access documents such as court records, forms, legal aid information, and video explainers to walk people through legal concepts and processes. The kiosk can be accessed at the courthouse or virtually from one’s personal device by visiting their website. This technology allows some court users to access information at their own convenience and desired location.¹³



⁹ *Problems and Recommendations for High Volume Dockets: Appendix I.* Civil Justice Improvements Committee. <https://perma.cc/4SQN-Q5VH>

¹⁰ *Building a Court for the 21st Century.* Oregon Judicial Department. Oregon Judicial Department, Multnomah County Court, September 2020. <https://perma.cc/2DZP-64J7>

¹¹ *A2J Videos.* National Center for State Courts. <https://perma.cc/7DRQ-VG4M>

¹² *Press Release: Court Kiosk Will Help Court Users in Monroe County Circuit Court.* Arkansas Access to Justice Commission. <https://perma.cc/WJU8-3A85>

¹³ *Providing self-help kiosks in community locations can be a great way to reach a larger number of your population.* See, Tiny Chat: 34: *Sea Captains and Kiosks.* National Center for State Courts. 2021. <https://perma.cc/DK86-GU7G>.

This video can help courts get some ideas about placing kiosks in community locations and learn more about best practices for self-help kiosks. See also, S. Melton. *Virtual Court Kiosk Brings Access to Legal Assistance to Low Income Families: The Goal is to Bridge the Digital Divide Through Technology.* CW39 Houston. May 4, 2023. <https://perma.cc/YMZ3-CQZP>. The Texas Legal Services Center has launched a virtual court access project that aims to help low-income Texans access free legal services. English and Spanish virtual kiosks have been installed throughout the community in places such as local libraries, shelters, clinics, and other locations. The kiosks allow users to attend remote court hearings, get free legal help, and search for legal resources.

Improve User Experiences

Implementing the technologies discussed throughout this document can provide a better user experience for all court users, including the public, jurors, staff members, judges, lawyers, and others. Check-in, queuing, and wayfinding technology can facilitate a fast, convenient, and streamlined process to access information and attend court hearings. Court users may have difficulty finding time to conduct business at the courthouse within their daily schedules.¹⁴ Between work, childcare, and household responsibilities, many individuals would benefit from an expedited or alternative process to navigate the system. Without such options, many risk not showing up for court, with serious consequences.¹⁵ Time spent in the courthouse can also cause financial stress on court users who may have to pay for childcare or take time off work and can become more challenging as the number of appearances required increases.¹⁶

Automating check-in processes with mobile applications and self-service kiosks can create a more user-friendly environment where court users may navigate the courthouse quickly and efficiently.¹⁷ Providing online check-in can reduce the amount of time spent in the courthouse, allowing court users to skip lines and report directly to their designated courtroom.¹⁸ Once in the courthouse, these digital tools can serve as a great benefit to guide users to their appropriate locations with wayfinding strategies that quickly inform users of their surroundings. Queuing technologies can help keep the flow of foot traffic moving and reduce congestion in public spaces and waiting areas. Clear information that can be accessed autonomously can make users feel like they have more control over their time spent in the courthouse and can leave them feeling like they had a more positive experience.

Potential Challenges

Potential challenges when implementing technology solutions do exist but are not insurmountable for courts. Some challenges for consideration include user error, the digital divide, security risks and confidentiality, and technical difficulties. An overview of these potential challenges is provided below along with links to additional resources.

User Error

It is imperative that courts implement systems that are intuitive and user-friendly. User error is something to consider when designing check-in, queuing, and wayfinding technology for any courthouse. These tools will not benefit the public if they are not easy to access and use. User error can cause frustration and decreased satisfaction for the user and may create more work for

¹⁴ A. Wirkus, Z. Zarnow. *Alternative Court Hours Toolkit*. National Center for State Courts. 2023. <https://perma.cc/W3JJ-T4Q4>

¹⁵ *Appearance Rates*. National Center for State Courts. <https://perma.cc/D87U-6QN3>

¹⁶ A. Fishbane, S. Hammer, S. McAuliffe, A. Wilk. *National Guide to Improving Court Appearances*. Ideas42. May 2023. <https://perma.cc/4N2Z-LDCM>

¹⁷ *Riverside Superior Courts Implements New Intelligent Self-Help and Jury Self-Check-In Kiosks*. Superior Court of California County of Riverside. June 4, 2018. <https://perma.cc/PYS2-4FA6>

¹⁸ *AccessLACourt Your Way*. The Superior Court of California County of Los Angeles. <https://perma.cc/5545-Y9WG>

court staff to rectify the error. For example, one California court decided to remove their free-standing check-in kiosks due to challenges their users experienced while using the equipment.¹⁹ They found that some court users were not able to accurately select the service they required, and in turn were checking in for the wrong service or multiple services. User testing can be used to help mitigate the potential downsides of user error during the initial launch of the product ([see solicit user feedback](#)). During this phase of the project, courts can assess how the tools are being used and identify bugs in the system. Additionally, collecting user feedback can help courts understand issues that may be specific to individual users, such as ADA accommodations or language challenges.

The Digital Divide

Courts need to consider how their court users may be affected by the digital divide.²⁰ Although most Americans have access to the Internet today, a sizeable minority either do not have access or are not digitally literate ([see technology should serve to supplement face-to-face services](#)). The technologies discussed in this document can serve as a great benefit if they are thoughtfully designed, however, courts will still need to offer alternatives for court users who either cannot use the technology, or who choose not to. Offering training and assistance to court users can help alleviate some of these challenges.

Security Risks and Confidentiality

The risk of security breaches increases with the more digital tools a court implements. The number of cybersecurity attacks have surged in recent years, emphasizing the need for courts to know what safeguards are needed to protect their systems.²¹ Courts need to be prepared with a plan in place to respond to potential threats when designing and implementing check-in, queuing, and wayfinding technologies. This includes tasks such as vigilantly scanning the technology environment for new and developing threats and consistently assessing technologies for changing and evolving vulnerabilities ([see create a plan to respond to cybersecurity attacks](#)). Cybersecurity leaks and data breaches can lead to the identity theft of court users, which can consequently contribute to weakening public trust.²² Prevention strategies as well as regular testing, training, and monitoring can help mitigate security breaches. Read more about [cybersecurity basics for courts](#).

Juveniles require extra confidentiality considerations when implementing wayfinding technology. If your court hears cases that involve juveniles, their personal information should be protected. For example, electronic docket displays that include court users' names may be appropriate for adults; however, the names of juveniles should not be displayed for the public to view.²³

¹⁹ National Center for State Courts. Wayfinding and Signage Strategies for Language Access in the California Courts: Report and Recommendations. Judicial Council of California. February 2017. <https://perma.cc/HLG3-B9C9>

²⁰ Tiny Chat 4: Digital Divide. National Center for State Courts. 2020. <https://perma.cc/8DLH-6M73>

²¹ *Cybersecurity Basics for Courts*. Joint Technology Committee. September 15, 2021. <https://perma.cc/HX82-W9EN>

²² J. Tashea. *A Human Rights Approach to Justice Technology Procurement*. September 2023. <https://perma.cc/4LQY-AX4D>

²³ *Public Information and Wayfinding*. The Courthouse: A Guide to Planning & Design. National Center for State Courts. <https://perma.cc/AZ2G-NCHK>

Technical Difficulties

As with any use of technology, a potential challenge courts may experience when using the tools discussed in this document are technical issues. Experiencing glitches, network issues, poor internet connections, and server crashes are among some technical challenges that may arise. This can be discouraging for court users and may cause delays in conducting court business. For physical equipment purchased through a third party such as kiosks, electronic docket displays, and ticketing services, courts can work with their vendors to negotiate the terms of maintaining the equipment during the procurement and contracting phase ([see do your research on procurement and contracting](#)). Developing an internal procedure with your information technology (IT) team to manage and support web pages, virtual kiosks, remote hearings, and mobile applications created by the court can help resolve any technical difficulties in a timely and professional manner.

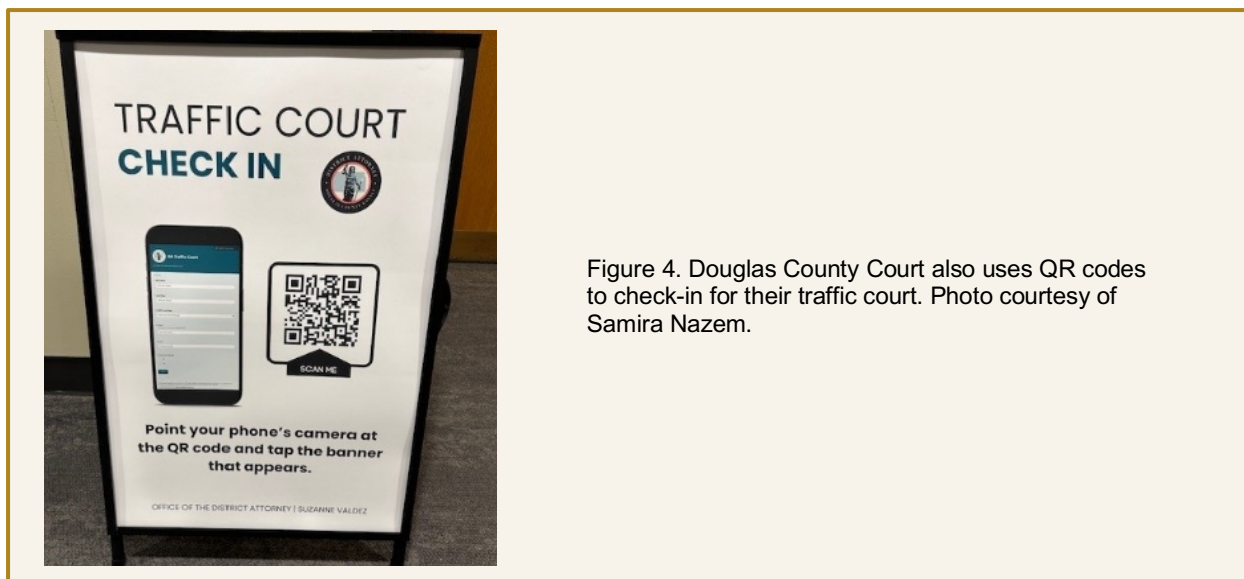
How Courts are Implementing These Tools

Implement Kiosks, QR Codes, and Online Platforms to Facilitate Checking-In to Court

There are several ways courts can use these tools to facilitate checking-in to court. Automated check-in technologies such as physical and virtual kiosks and online platforms can allow court users to quickly communicate with the court to inform them that they have arrived for their appointment prior to entering their desired destination.²⁴ When a court user utilizes a digital platform to check-in, their time of arrival and supporting information is recorded and can be accessed digitally throughout the courthouse. Integrating this technology across the court administration's, attorney's, and judge's devices can help move court users through the courthouse quickly and seamlessly, as all parties can be privy to the same information. For example, when a court user checks in for their hearing, the technology can allow for each party to receive the data without the need for staff interaction. Attorneys and judges can view notifications to see who has checked in and any supporting information, such as if the court user has representation or requires any accommodation. Courts can customize check-in technology to route court users to their appropriate destinations. Once the check-in process is complete, the technology can provide automated case and courtroom information to help court users navigate the courthouse. **Montgomery county, OH Domestic Relations Court** was the first court in Ohio to implement check-in kiosks. Prior to the kiosk installations, the check-in system required one receptionist to inform each of the ten courtrooms of the visitors who had checked in. Now, the receptionist, judges, and magistrates can almost instantaneously see when litigants and attorneys have arrived using the new technology. The kiosks provide court users with their hearing times along with directions to the appropriate courtroom upon check-in. With multiple kiosks, multiple visitors can check-in simultaneously, expediting the process on busy days.

²⁴ *Creating a User-Friendly Court Structure and Environment*. National Association for Court Management. 2016. <https://perma.cc/WY3D-E8AW>

The same type of technology can be used to facilitate the check-in process for jurors reporting to the courthouse for jury duty. Jurors can face the same inconveniences as general court users regarding waiting in line to access information and checking-in with court staff. Online platforms can ease some of the stress and save time for both jurors and staff members by allowing jurors to complete parts of the check-in process autonomously. Offering supplemental access to check-in services can allow staff to offer better assistance to court users who prefer face-to-face interaction or who require additional support. **Maricopa County, AZ Superior Court** uses an online platform to allow jurors to complete their juror questionnaire online prior to arriving at court.²⁵ This technology can help expedite the process for jurors who have access to the internet by avoiding multiple trips to the court and eliminating some administrative work on the day they are required to report to court. Once jurors arrive at court, quick response (QR) codes²⁶ are used to streamline the jury check-in process. At the door to the jury assembly room, there is a notice advising court users to use their phone to check-in by scanning a QR code. QR codes are a convenient check-in method, as multiple individuals can scan the codes at the same time and complete the check-in process without having to stand in line. Courts that offer mobile and online technology to facilitate court services should offer free public wireless internet to ensure all court users who choose to access the services are not burdened by costs to access the technology.



Remote hearings became a standard offering during the Covid pandemic and are likely to remain as data has shown that they improve public access, reduce barriers to appearance, and can more easily address the needs and preferences of court users.²⁷ Remote hearings can enhance access to justice and save court users time and money as they may avoid childcare costs, transportations

²⁵ *How to respond to a Jury Summons: Video*. Superior Court of Arizona in Maricopa County. <https://perma.cc/56CA-JDSF>

²⁶ Read The National Center for State Court's QR code best practices guide to get a better understanding of how to use QR codes at <https://perma.cc/K3BS-SJ93>

²⁷ G. Spulak. *Remote Proceeding Toolkit, Version 2*. National Center for State Courts. 2024. <https://perma.cc/2Q2L-H27C>

costs, and taking time off work.²⁸ As courts continue to navigate remote hearings, they must consider procedures and best practices for court users to check-in to their hearings. The check-in process should be intuitive, user-friendly, and accessible. Courts should be transparent with court users about how the process will work with step-by-step instructions.²⁹ The **Orange County, CA Superior Court** is conducting a pilot for an automated check-in process for their remote hearings held on Zoom.³⁰ In an effort to increase access to justice, the court has also introduced a mobile phone application for the automated check-in technology. Users who may not have access to a computer may access check-in services and remote hearings through their mobile phones,³¹ increasing convenience and flexibility.

Courts should design processes that are less time consuming and more convenient for users ([see improve user experiences](#)). For example, consider implementing individual scheduling to offer court users a set time to check-in to their hearing.³² Staggered case scheduling can be used to manage queuing, help court users plan for their court appearances, and eliminate the practice of “cattle calling” where litigants wait for their case to be called with uncertainty.³³ Courts can leverage automated messaging to communicate with court users through multiple channels such as text messages, email, phone calls, etc. to let individuals know when their case will be called. This method can allow individuals to be present for other daily tasks, such as childcare or work, while they wait.

Implement Electronic Docket Displays, Ticketing Services, Kiosks, Buzzers, and Mobile Application Technology to Manage Movement and Reduce Wait Times

Courthouses that hear a variety of case types within different divisions can be particularly difficult for individuals to navigate. Public spaces and waiting areas congested with people can be stressful and cause confusion for court users – particularly those who are unfamiliar with the space. Queuing and wayfinding technology can help organize how court users move through the courthouse by quickly identifying their surroundings to access services and find designated destinations.³⁴ Electronic docket displays, building directories, maps, and electronic signage streamline the flow of foot traffic and simplify maneuvering through the courthouse. These tools

²⁸ Prof. K. Hugenberg, Dr. R. Hutchings, Prof. V. Quintanilla, Dr. N. Yel. *Accessing Justice with Zoom: Experiences and Outcomes in Online Civil Courts*. Indiana University Bloomington Maurer School of Law. 2023. <https://perma.cc/D8TV-ZLH5>

²⁹ *Remote Hearing Instructions – Zoom*. Superior Court of California County of Orange. October 15, 2020. <https://perma.cc/JBE7-PXW4>

³⁰ *Probate Automated Check In Public Instruction Video*. Superior Court of California County of Orange. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waKaiJfeL8A>.

³¹ *Court Implements a Mobile Phone Application for the Automated Check-in Program in Civil*. Superior Court of California County of Orange. February 21, 2023. <https://perma.cc/ZJ2B-EUYC>

³² *Remote Hearings and Access to Justice: During Covid-19 and Beyond*. California Commission on Access to Justice. <https://perma.cc/5UR7-QU3R>

³³ L. Kyhos summers, Z. Zarnow. *Pandemic Era Procedural Improvements That Courts Should Adopt Permanently*. September 2022. <https://perma.cc/H63E-GD6X>

³⁴ National Center for State Courts. *Wayfinding and Signage Strategies for Language Access in the California Courts: Report and Recommendations*. Judicial Council of California. February 2017. <https://perma.cc/23QN-YH2Y>

provide court users the opportunity to locate their destinations independently or can help lead them to staff members for additional support.

The Madera County, CA Superior Court designed multi-lingual wayfinding kiosks to offer a new level of service to their court users. The kiosks are available in English and Spanish, the two main languages spoken in the community, and can be used to guide court users through the courthouse.³⁵ **Cobb County, GA Superior Court** utilizes electronic docket displays on digital screens throughout the lobby and on each floor of the courthouse.³⁶ As one of the most populated counties in Georgia, hundreds of visitors move through the building each day to access court services. Prior to installing the digital screens, visitors navigated the courthouse with paper dockets and assistance from staff. The technology is integrated with the court’s case management system to display case information including a person’s name, case number, the time of the hearing, and the name of the judge hearing the case. The information is updated in real-time to maintain accurate and up-to-date information.




Figure 7. Mesa Justice Center also uses electronic docket displays to help users find their way through the courthouse.

Mesa County Justice Center. Infax.
<https://perma.cc/357D-VP8X>

PARTY NAME	COURTROOM	TIME	CASE NUMBER
Barela, Dustin	3	2:30 pm	10DR876
Bash, Megan	7	3:30 pm	12C 1222
Boyd, Nancy	4	10:00 am	11DR1088
Boyd, William	4	10:00 am	11DR1088
Creasman, April	5	8:00 am	12JV127
Criswell, Michael	7	3:30 pm	12C 1222
Derosia, Danielle	4	4:00 pm	03DR462
Detray, Thomas	4	4:00 pm	03DR462
Dewey, Luke	3	9:00 am	10DR232
Dewey, Tiffany	3	9:00 am	10DR232
Does, John	3	4:30 pm	11JV300
Gedstad, Joseph	4	9:00 am	12JD92
Gedstad, Joseph	4	9:00 am	12JD127
Grovier, Alexander	8	1:00 pm	12C 1047
Hernandez, Richard	5	8:30 am	10CR1438
Hodson, Brett	7	2:00 pm	12DR124

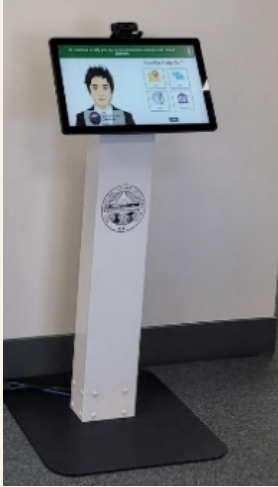


Figure 8. Akron Municipal Court in Ohio has installed an Interactive Kiosk to assist in wayfinding. Photo courtesy of Rob Wall.

The Superior Court of California, County of Alameda has also taken steps to develop convenient ways to help their court users navigate the courthouse and services.³⁷ The court implemented a free mobile application that allows court users to access the case information, manage traffic tickets, get text reminders, and contact a division of the court by phone. The mobile application lets users who possess personal devices move freely in the courthouse and avoid possible wait times to access information.

³⁵ NCSC spoke with Madera County Superior Court’s Executive Officer to learn more about their wayfinding kiosks.

³⁶ *Cobb County Superior Court. Infax.* <https://perma.cc/56LW-VCF8>

³⁷ See a mobile application preview of Superior Court of California, County of Alameda’s mobile application from the apple store here: <https://perma.cc/P5M9-E3G9>

Queuing technology can be utilized to efficiently route court users to their designated points of service with limited staff interaction. Effective procedures can reduce wait times for court users and increase the management of the flow of foot traffic.

Using technology such as ticketing services and online appointment platforms can help court staff track how users move through the courthouse and alleviate some manual work. Virtual queuing technology can save court users from physically standing in a line. With help from technology such as buzzers and automated text

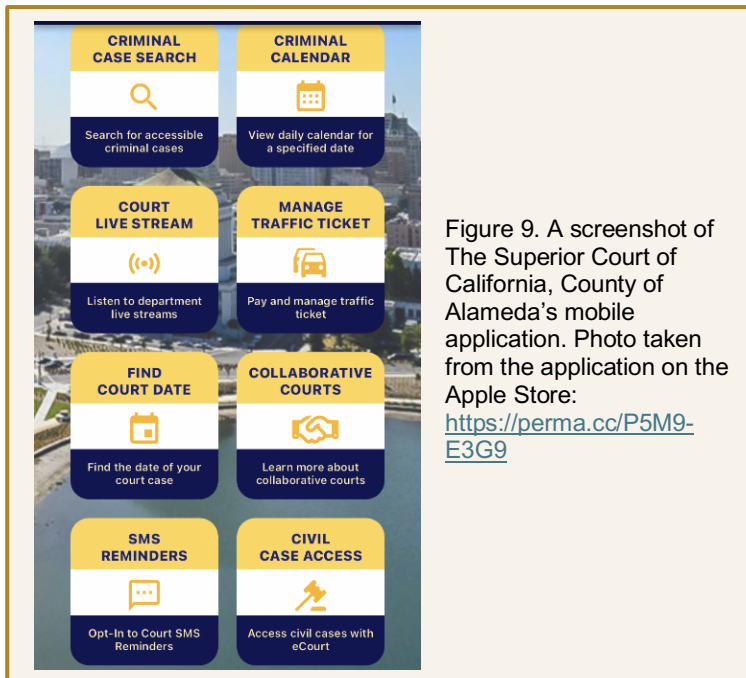


Figure 9. A screenshot of The Superior Court of California, County of Alameda's mobile application. Photo taken from the application on the Apple Store: <https://perma.cc/P5M9-E3G9>

messaging, court users can move around freely until they are notified to report back to receive the required service. For example, **Sacramento's Juvenile Justice Court in California** uses buzzers similar to what you would find at a restaurant to manage the flow of traffic.³⁸ Waiting in line can be frustrating, and allowing court users to move around and potentially fulfill other tasks while waiting can create a more positive environment and a better user experience.³⁹ Maryland Court Help Centers use text messaging technology to inform court users when it's their turn to meet with staff.⁴⁰ The text messages can be translated into multiple languages to accommodate court users who don't speak English. For those who do not have mobile devices or who do not want the court to communicate with them through text messaging, waiting areas are available. Similarly, **Lawrence Township, IN Small Claims Court** is looking into the implementation of text messaging to facilitate queuing for both in-person and remote hearings.⁴¹ Litigants will even be allowed to leave the physical or remote courtroom and receive a text notification when their case is close to being called. The court also utilizes technology to track court users through the system.⁴² The court technology creates a ticket number for each participant upon check-in to track them as they move through the system. Digital monitors placed in each of the stations (legal

³⁸ L. Kyhos Summers, Z. Zarnow. *Pandemic Era Procedural Improvements That Courts Should Adopt Permanently*. September 2022. <https://perma.cc/TGT4-KXS6>

³⁹ *How to Simplify Court Processes to Support User Engagement: Steps for Making Civil Courts More Effective*. The PEW Charitable Trusts. December 2023. <https://perma.cc/TM6E-FDB3>

⁴⁰ L. Kyhos summers, Z. Zarnow. *Pandemic Era Procedural Improvements That Courts Should Adopt Permanently*. September 2022. <https://perma.cc/TGT4-KXS6>

⁴¹ On-Site Video Legal Services: Innovations in Lawrence Township Small Claims Court. Indiana Court Times. March 22, 2021. <https://perma.cc/625K-BKM6>

⁴² NCSC conducted an interview with the Eviction Diversion Initiative's Grant Administrator of Lawrence Township Small Claims Court to learn more about the queuing technology they have implemented.

services, navigation, facilitation, the court room, and the waiting room) allow the court and other parties to quickly determine where participants are located in the process.

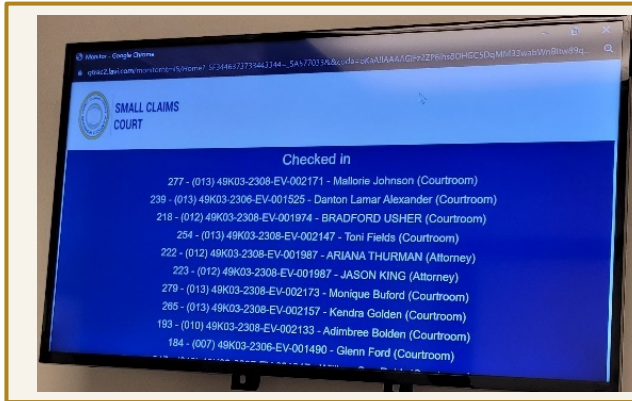


Figure 10. Lawrence Township, IN Small Claims Court's digital monitor used to track court users. Photo courtesy of Samira Nazem.

Merced, CA Superior Court created a ticketing system to manage wait times and movement in the courthouse.⁴³ Visitors can monitor their place in line using one of two options: (1) take a paper ticket from a labeled standing sign and wait until their number is announced, keeping track of their position through digital screens, or (2) monitor their status in line through a website provided by the court. The second option allows visitors to track their place in line from an electronic device, such as their mobile phone and does not require them to stay in the waiting room. The self-help center manages the queue by dividing visitors into lines based on their needs. There are two lines: one for those who need to see an attorney, and the other for those who need to see a court clerk. A color-coding system is used to help differentiate the lines.



Figure 11. Clark County Superior Court in Vancouver, WA also utilizes a ticketing system in their clerk's office. Photo courtesy of Samira Nazem.

⁴³ *Implementation of Ticket Service System for Merced Superior Court*. California Courts The Judicial Branch of California. <https://perma.cc/HW3Q-XGBX>

Implement Self-Service Kiosks, Explainer Videos, and Remote Technology to Provide Access to Legal Information and Court Services

Courts can use the following tools to improve public access to information and services.⁴⁴ Self-service kiosks, explainer videos, remote technology, and flexible scheduling in general can allow court users to access services quickly, independently, and on their own time. Court users can access the information and services ahead of their court date to conduct research and prepare for their hearing.⁴⁵ These solutions can reduce the need to wait for staff assistance for those who are able to navigate the technology on their own. They can also provide legal information for self-represented litigants who are looking for more in-depth support. Court users can access a range of resources including printing of court forms, procedural information, legal aid information and more. **Riverside, CA Superior Court** implemented a multilingual self-help kiosk to offer services to a wider range of court users.⁴⁶ Each language has its own avatar that acts as a virtual assistant to aid court users in finding what they need. Some communities are using virtual kiosks to improve access to justice and expand access to services outside of the courthouse.

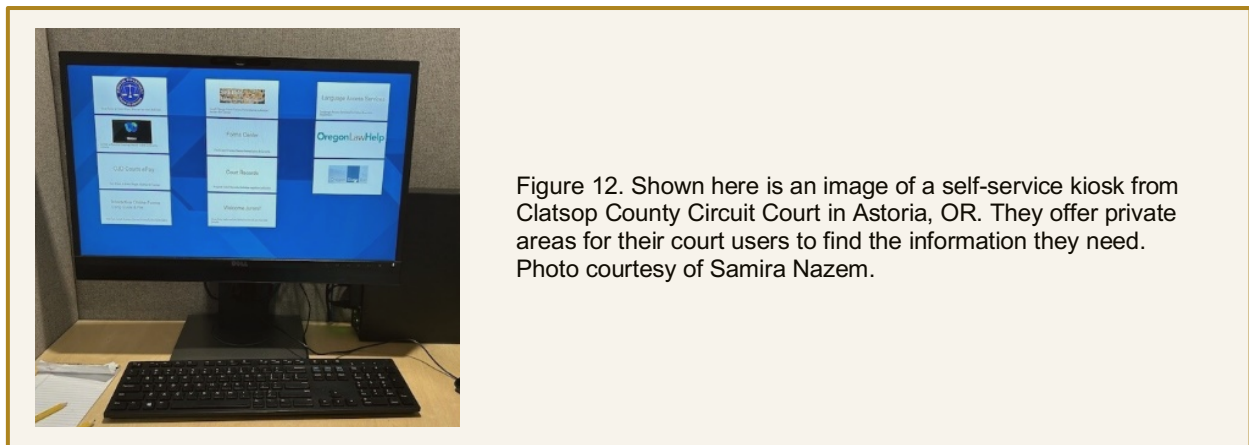


Figure 12. Shown here is an image of a self-service kiosk from Clatsop County Circuit Court in Astoria, OR. They offer private areas for their court users to find the information they need. Photo courtesy of Samira Nazem.

Remote technology can facilitate access to court services outside of normal business hours and when staff are off duty, allowing court users an opportunity to conduct their court business when it is convenient for them, without having to travel to the court. For example, the **Circuit Court of Cook County, IL** holds after hours remote hearings for litigants requesting a civil emergency order of protection. Hearings can be scheduled online, and hours are available from 9pm-3am on weekdays and 1pm-6pm on weekends.⁴⁷ Other courts, such as the **District Court of Johnson County, KS**, experimented with night court after receiving feedback that court users were struggling to attend court during normal business hours.⁴⁸ The court began holding hearings

⁴⁴ *Technology*. The Courthouse: A Guide to Planning & Design. National Center for State Courts. <https://perma.cc/4ULT-D74U>

⁴⁵ M. Odendahl. *At the Touch of a Finger: Indiana Bar Foundation Deploying 120 Kiosks to Provide Civil Legal Help*. The Indiana Lawyer. November 23, 2022. <https://perma.cc/ZBB4-AKW8>

⁴⁶ *Riverside Superior Courts Implements New Intelligent Self-Help and Jury Self-Check-In Kiosks*. Superior Court of California County of Riverside. June 4, 2018. <https://perma.cc/PYS2-4FA6>

⁴⁷ *Family & Safety*. Illinois Legal Aid Online. November 28, 2023. <https://perma.cc/7EQW-3XDU>

⁴⁸ *Tiny Chat 50: Night Court*. National Center for State Courts. 2021. <https://perma.cc/2ZQN-AELQ>

starting from 5:30pm once a month. Sessions are held in the self-help center to make finding the location easier for court users. The two main benefits reported by court users who attended the program included not having to take time off work and not needing to arrange additional childcare.

Best Practices

Solicit User Feedback

Courts should collect feedback from court users during each phase of implementation – before designing tools, during the initial launch, and after tools have been installed for some time. During the design phase, courts have an opportunity to ask court users how they view current processes and procedures, which will provide a baseline of understanding of what to prioritize. Identify what challenge(s) you are aiming to improve and use the data to address gaps in services. Including court users in the digital transformation process can promote more confidence and better access to justice, because it will be tailored to meet their specific needs and interests.

During the initial launch of new check-in, queuing, and/or wayfinding technology, courts should perform user testing and solicit feedback to understand if systems are user-friendly. Getting feedback from the people who are using the services is a crucial step to improving court processes, keeping your services up to date, and ensuring bugs are fixed immediately. Some user testing methods to consider include interviews, focus groups, and surveys. It is important to connect with a diverse group of court users to ensure that the systems are helpful, useful, and understandable for all users. Non-English speakers and court users with disabilities should be included to evaluate the accessibility of the technology and measure if the tools are meeting their needs. Testing groups do not need to be large, five people is sufficient,⁴⁹ but the outcome can help courts avoid implementing expensive tools that are not effective for court users.⁵⁰

Once your tools have been implemented and user tested, soliciting feedback should become a regular practice to ensure systems continue to meet the needs of court users. Courts can use this data to compare with the baseline data collected to measure how user needs and preferences evolve. Bugs and issues with the systems can also be tracked in this phase to capture any problems that may have been missed during the launch or monitor new issues that may arise. Urgent issues can be addressed immediately, whereas broader goals can be included in future updates to the system. Satisfaction surveys can assist courts in understanding some challenges and inefficiencies visitors may be experiencing,⁵¹ like **Utah State Courts** performance measure surveys that ask questions about disability assistance and language barriers.⁵² Gathering

⁴⁹ G. Spulak, L. Summers. *Best Practices for Creating Legal Self-Help Materials: A Toolkit for Courts and Legal Service Agencies*. National Center for State Courts. March 2023. <https://perma.cc/T9Z5-QT9P>

⁵⁰ *How Courts Embraced Technology, Met the Pandemic Challenge, and Revolutionized Their Operations*. The PEW Charitable Trusts. December 1, 2021. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2021/12/how-courts-embraced-technology-met-the-pandemic-challenge-and-revolutionized-their-operations>

⁵¹ *Can Courts Be More User-Friendly? How Satisfaction Surveys Can Promote Trust and Access to Justice*. Center for Court Innovation. <https://perma.cc/HU6Z-WZBH>

⁵² *Access and Fairness in the Courts: Performance Measures*. Utah State Courts the Judicial Branch of Utah. <https://www.utcourts.gov/en/court-records-publications/publications/performance-measures/access.html>

feedback not only benefits the court, but also empowers court users. “When people feel like they have a voice in the process, they are more likely to have trust and confidence in that legal authority and are more likely to cooperate and comply with what the authority is asking of them.”⁵³

Do Your Research on Procurement and Contracting

Once you have identified the type of check-in, queuing, and/or wayfinding technology you intend to implement, it is highly beneficial to conduct market research to get an idea of what kinds of services and vendors are out there, what other courts are using, and which vendor may best align with your goals. Most technology will require ongoing services, which means it is necessary to choose a reliable vendor. Requests for information (RFI) and requests for proposals (RFP) are tools that can be used to ensure your priorities are met. An RFI is a great approach to get vendors to lay out their solution to your challenges, and an RFP can lay out your expectations for the service such as data considerations, specific functions, and accommodations you require.⁵⁴ Courts should be aware of their rights and negotiate contracts that define them in terms that give them control over how users’ data is collected and used, how updates and changes are made, and how to manage security issues or maintenance of the tools they intend to implement. As technology evolves and court users’ needs change, it is important to maintain control as the way courts deliver these services will change as well.

Technical issues are inevitable when implementing the digital tools discussed throughout this document. Negotiating a contract that clearly defines which parties will be responsible for updating, maintaining, and fixing any issues can help mitigate a potential dispute between the court and vendor. For more in depth guidance on how to achieve effective contracts for your digital service, see NCSC’s [Contracting Digital Services for Courts](#).⁵⁵ This document specifically elaborates on procedural rights and digital fairness considerations.

Just as important as planning to enter into a new digital services contract is planning for the exit from a current technology and/or vendor contract. Transitions are inevitable and can be the result of many different reasons initiated by either party. Preparing for a contract to end *before* it begins can help manage risks, enhance your partnership, and secure a smoother transition. Read [Exiting Technology Projects](#)⁵⁶ to learn more about how to prepare to shift from status quo to the use of different technology.

Anticipate How to Properly Manage Data and Privacy

Data governance, briefly mentioned above, refers to the collection of, use, and removal of data.⁵⁷ Data governance policies are especially important for courts to navigate appropriately as court systems increasingly depend on data to manage information and inform decisions. Court users are vulnerable to privacy violations as they do not have control over (and are often not informed

⁵³ E. LaGratta. *User Feedback is Essential*. National Center for State Courts. 2023. <https://perma.cc/7SNB-TWLG>

⁵⁴ *Tiny Chat: 56 Procurement*. National Center for State Courts. 2021. <https://perma.cc/53HN-SLBF>

⁵⁵ S. McDonald, Z. Zarnow. *Contracting Digital Services to Courts*. May 2022. <https://perma.cc/UJ8B-Q58S>

⁵⁶ D. Hirsch, K. Pacaro, Z. Zarnow. *Exiting Technology Projects*. National Center for State Courts, Small Scale. 2021. <https://perma.cc/F8HJ-K4D6>

⁵⁷ *Data Governance Policy Guide*. National Center for State Courts. <https://perma.cc/X3XD-YZMD>

about) what happens with their data.⁵⁸ When court users use the tools discussed in this document such as kiosks and online platforms, their personal information and data live inside of these systems and become the court's responsibility to protect. Possible information that may be collected includes personal identifiers such as social security numbers, juror identities, names, addresses, phone numbers, and driver's license numbers. Bank and financial information may also be collected when using kiosks to process payments. Sealed and confidential information can be stored on these systems involving case specific information such as victim information in domestic violence cases and medical information. If breaches occur, court users may fall victim to identity theft or safety concerns. Courts are obligated to ensure proper management of data when partnering with vendors to implement these new technologies. Negotiating contracts that give courts authority and ownership over the data collected on their court users can help mitigate issues such as data being sold to third parties, which can increase the risk of data breaches and privacy violations. NCSC's [Data Governance Policy Guide](#) is a great resource to assist courts in developing, assessing, and maintaining effective policies. Courts may also consider installing privacy shields to their kiosks or computers to prevent personal and sensitive information from easily being viewed by others in the vicinity.

Create a Plan to Respond to Cybersecurity Attacks

Cybersecurity attacks may be inevitable with the implementation of kiosks and digital platforms that store personal information as discussed above. Although a court may not be able to prevent attacks, they can implement some prevention strategies to help reduce the risk or severity of an attack and plan for recovery if a breach were to take place. This involves strategies including but not limited to analyzing the equipment to assess points of entry and threat level, physical security monitoring, limiting access to cleared individuals, segmenting networks to limit impact of a breach, regular security updates, and training staff. Putting together a cybersecurity team to respond to potential attacks is part of the recovery plan. Include IT staff and individuals from various departments of the court that will be involved in managing or reporting a breach. Vendors that design these systems should also be included as part of the team. Each member should have specific responsibilities and meet regularly to share information and plan for a response to an attack. Read NCSC's [Cybersecurity Basics for Courts](#) to learn more about planning for a cybersecurity attack.

Ensure Your Technology is Accessible

The Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) and Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA) has urged courts to implement technology that reduces barriers and meets the needs of all court users.⁵⁹ Part of the initial assessment of current check-in, queuing, and wayfinding systems and processes should consider the accessibility needs of court users. It is very important to include court users who need certain accommodations in the conversation of digital transformation and

⁵⁸ J. Tashea. *A Human Rights Approach to Justice Technology and Procurement*. Georgetown Law Technology Review. September 2023. <https://perma.cc/4LQY-AX4D>. Tashea discusses how to accomplish sustainable procurement for digital services to ensure the rights of people involved are protected. Courts can use this resource to gain a better understanding of what considerations should be made when vetting potential vendors.

⁵⁹ *Resolution 2: In Support of the Guiding Principles for Post-Pandemic Court Technology*. Conference of Chief Justices, Conference of State Court Administrators. 2020. <https://perma.cc/X54K-T5YM>

solicit feedback to understand how to best meet their needs ([see solicit user feedback](#)). The following is intended to help courts think about some of the accessibility standards that should be considered when designing and implementing the tools and methods discussed throughout this document.

Disability

Under Title II of the ADA, state and local governments are obligated to offer people with disabilities equal opportunities to benefit from all programs, services, and activities.⁶⁰ Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act speaks specifically to accessibility and technology, requiring that all individuals with a disability have the same access to information and data as people who do not have a disability.⁶¹ For resources that may help courts understand what kinds of things to look for when designing their systems, see the following.

- The American Bar Association has released [some best practices on choosing an accessible virtual platform](#).⁶²
- The U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division's [Guidance on Web Accessibility and the ADA](#).⁶³

Physical Impairment: Court users with any physical impairment should not be excluded from using these tools. This may include impairment that requires a person to use a wheelchair or other mobility devices. Think about the physical space surrounding equipment such as kiosks, electronic docket displays, and ticket dispensers. For example, the accessible route to get to the equipment (door width, floor transition height, travel distance, etc.), the accessible space surrounding the equipment (clear floor space, turning radius, approach direction, etc.), and accessible operation of the equipment (reach ranges, knee and toe space, operable part ranges, etc.). The ADA provides a [guide on accessible design](#),⁶⁴ which outlines specific space and reach requirements for wheelchair users. The following are a few questions to consider when implementing these tools in your court.

- Is there enough clear floor space for a wheelchair or other mobility device to easily maneuver to and within the space, operate the kiosk, and exit the area while not overlapping other building functions such as corridors?
- Does the height of kiosk operable functions allow someone in a wheelchair to comfortably access and view the screen using a side and/or front approach?
- Will users be able to maneuver, approach, and operate ticket dispensers?
- Are you placing electronic docket displays in spaces, at heights, and viewing angle that accommodate someone using a wheelchair or other mobility device?

⁶⁰ *Title II State and Local Governments*. Americans with Disabilities Act. <https://perma.cc/7AY9-33JB>

⁶¹ *Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act*. Federal Communications Commission. <https://perma.cc/FKK2-FEHD>

⁶² Commission on Disability Rights. *Choosing an Accessible Virtual Platform*. American Bar Association. <https://perma.cc/Y9PN-H63F>

⁶³ *Guidance on Web Accessibility and the ADA*. U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. <https://perma.cc/6ZE3-5HLY>

⁶⁴ *2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design: Chapter 3*. American with Disabilities Act. September 15, 2010. <https://perma.cc/NV6D-S9FD>

Visual Impairment: Assistive technology can help court users with visual impairments access these digital services. For example, a blind or visually impaired court user wishing to access tools such as a standing or virtual kiosk, or wishing to schedule an appointment online may require assistive technology, including screen reader software to audibly read text or braille displays to use computer systems.⁶⁵ Providing headphones may be necessary to protect the privacy of the court user if sensitive case or personal information is read aloud in public spaces. Think about the text on your kiosk and website screens and consider the following questions.

- Is the font large enough and legible to someone who is visually impaired?
- Is the color of the text easy to distinguish?
- Can users zoom in to text or images on the screen to increase visibility?

For guidance on text font, size, and screen accommodations such as color and zoom functions, see [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2](#).⁶⁶ For users who may access these tools on their personal mobile devices, such as the ticketing system implemented by Merced, CA Superior Court, see *Mobile Accessibility*⁶⁷ for guidance on how to best accommodate court users accessing information and services on their personal devices.

Remote Infrared Audible Signage (RIAS) are hand-held communication devices that read signs to users in the form of an audible message to help navigate their spaces.⁶⁸ This device may be helpful for users to access the wayfinding and queuing technology discussed in this document such as digital signage and ticket number displays. These types of tools can help court users navigate the courthouse and should be accessible to all users.

Hearing Impairment: Courts can offer several assistive technologies to enable hearing impaired users to have full and equitable access to services. When implementing tools that use audio technology, consider your court users and their ability to hear the information. Video explainers and remote hearings, for example, should integrate auxiliary aids such as captioning and sign language translation/interpreting. Captioning is a tool that translates audio content into text displays for users to read.⁶⁹ For users who cannot read captioning, sign language translation should also be available. Most Americans who are deaf use American Sign Language (ASL) or Pidgin Signed English to communicate.⁷⁰ Consider how your check-in, queuing, and wayfinding technology can incorporate sign language to accommodate court users navigating court services both in-person and remotely. For more information on how to accommodate hearing-impaired court users read the following.

- The ADA's [guidance on communication disabilities](#),⁷¹ and

⁶⁵ *Screen Readers*. American Foundation for the Blind. <https://perma.cc/8MAG-FGL6>

⁶⁶ *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2 overview*. Web Accessibility Initiative. Updated March 7, 2024. <https://perma.cc/Z9GV-QK8C>

⁶⁷ *Mobile Accessibility: How WCAG 2.0 and Other W3C/WAI Guidelines Apply to Mobile*. World Wide Web Consortium. February 26, 2015. <https://perma.cc/EC6V-KTNY>

⁶⁸ *Justice for All: Designing Accessible Courthouses*. U.S. Access board. <https://perma.cc/D3QM-4SPW>

⁶⁹ *What is Captioning?* National Association of the Deaf. <https://perma.cc/3VCH-B9TB>

⁷⁰ *Justice for All: Designing Accessible Courthouses*. U.S. Access board. <https://perma.cc/U22X-KWY3>

⁷¹ *ADA Requirements: Effective Communication*. Americans with Disabilities Act. Updated February 28, 2020. <https://perma.cc/ZVL8-RC2N>

- The American Bar Association’s [guide on how to make Zoom accessible for deaf and hard-of-hearing users](#)⁷²

Mental Impairment: Mental impairments are frequently overlooked because they are unseen disabilities. These mental impairments include psychological disorders and mental illnesses such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). The ADA requires courts to communicate with people with disabilities as effectively as they communicate with others.⁷³ However, this does not necessarily mean that new or different assistive devices and/or strategies need to be devised. Rather, individuals with mental impairments may benefit from some of the assistive devices and/or strategies intended and implemented to enable individuals with other types of impairments (physical, visual, and hearing). To help enable individuals with these types of impairments to better receive, process, send, and comprehend information, courts can consider the following.

- Captioning that translates live audio into text for hearing impaired individuals could be used for an individual with an auditory processing impairment.
- The headphones used to protect the privacy of visually impaired persons could also be used to reduce noise for an individual with an audible distraction disorder.

Plain Language

Court users come from different backgrounds and have different levels of understanding when it comes to reading, writing, and speaking English. Studies have shown that even people with high literacy and comprehension of a topic can have trouble processing the information under stress.⁷⁴ All of the tools discussed in this document should incorporate the use of plain language to enhance the understanding of the court system, processes and procedures. For example, self-service kiosks can provide services including but not limited to support with court forms, step-by-step procedural guides, case information, legal information for self-represented litigants, and how to find legal representation. These services lose their benefits if court users cannot understand the meaning. Courts have an obligation to effectively communicate with all court users. A clear understanding of court processes and procedures can increase confidence and trust in the justice system. Beyond obligation, using plain language can benefit courts. The need for staff interaction to answer questions may be reduced, alleviating some stress on staff.⁷⁵ See NCSC’s [plain language glossary](#) for guidance and examples.

Language Access

Court services should aim to eliminate language barriers to serve all users of the court system equally. “Access to justice is unattainable for those who are not proficient in English unless they

⁷² Commission of Disability Rights. *Zoom: Accessibility for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing*. American Bar Association. <https://perma.cc/X825-WP NR>

⁷³ *Title II State and Local Governments*. Americans with Disabilities Act. <https://perma.cc/7AY9-33JB>

⁷⁴ *Plain Language Guide: How to Incorporate Plain Language into Court Forms, Websites, and Other Materials*. National Association for Court Management. Updated January 7, 2019. <https://perma.cc/M7YM-N8LW>

⁷⁵ *Plain Language Guide: How to Incorporate Plain Language into Court Forms, Websites, and Other Materials*. National Association for Court Management. Updated January 7, 2019. <https://perma.cc/M7YM-N8LW>

also have access to language services that will enable them to understand and be understood.”⁷⁶ Data can be sourced from [American Community Survey](#) through the United States Census Bureau to help identify spoken languages in the community.⁷⁷ The use of translation software can allow courts to serve a larger population more efficiently and effectively, provided these tools are used properly and do not replace trained interpreters. A best practice in designing digital systems is to install technology that permits court users to access services in their preferred language or directs them to interpreting services if necessary. [Wayfinding and Signage Strategies for Language Access in the California Courts](#) offers best practices for language access considerations in the courthouse.⁷⁸

New Mexico was ranked number one in the nation for language access in the legal system in 2020.⁷⁹ They have built their own multilingual avatar, named Clara. Clara has been integrated into a standing kiosk and deployed throughout courthouses in New Mexico with the goal of eliminating barriers to language, literacy, and accessibility for court users.⁸⁰ Clara can communicate in English, Spanish, Diné, and will soon be able to communicate in Chinese and Vietnamese as well. As a first point of contact, the kiosk is intended to give court users a place to learn about their case, connect with staff and interpreters, see directions to a specific location inside the courthouse, get answers to questions, and get forms emailed to them or printed for pick-up at the clerk’s office. The kiosk was updated during the Covid pandemic to offer touchless services. Clara kiosks can act as a virtual receptionist by speaking or writing to users for people who have difficulty reading or who have visual or hearing impairments. Clara was built to serve the communities in New Mexico but can be customizable based on the needs and demographics of communities interested in installing the kiosks.⁸¹



Figure 13. Shown here is a photo of Clara offering services in Spanish, shared from New Mexico Judiciary Administrative Office of the Courts Diversity and Inclusion Report.

Diversity & Inclusion Report: Language Access & ADA Services Issue I. New Mexico Judiciary Administrative Office of the Courts. 2021. <https://perma.cc/4YFM-XR8Y>

⁷⁶ *Standards for Language Access in Courts.* American Bar Association. February 6, 2012. https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_aid_indigent_defendants/ls_sclaid_standards_for_language_access_proposal.pdf

⁷⁷ *American Community Survey.* United States Census Bureau. <https://perma.cc/5RYM-DYU3>

⁷⁸ National Center for State Courts. *Wayfinding and Signage Strategies for Language Access in the California Courts: Report and Recommendations.* Judicial Council of California. February 2017. <https://perma.cc/HLG3-B9C9>

⁷⁹ *NM Ranked #1 in Nation for Language Access in the Justice System.* New Mexico Judiciary Administrative Office of the Courts. June 15, 2021. <https://perma.cc/G8MM-37R7>

⁸⁰ *Language Access Services Annual Report.* New Mexico Judiciary Administrative Office of the Courts. 2020. <https://perma.cc/SUX6-N6DB>

⁸¹ *Diversity & Inclusion Report: Language Access & ADA Services Issue I.* New Mexico Judiciary Administrative Office of the Courts. 2021. <https://perma.cc/4YFM-XR8Y>

Technology Should Serve to Supplement Face-to-Face Services

Although over 90% of American adults are using the Internet today,⁸² the digital divide continues to affect a sizable minority.⁸³ It is important to note that the digital divide does not only refer to access to the Internet or digital devices, but to digital literacy as well.⁸⁴ Courts should not replace staff interaction with technological innovations, but rather use technology to supplement access to services. Offering services exclusively in digital formats can create barriers for some court users. The tools discussed in this document can enhance access to justice and provide court users with convenient options to access services, but they should not create an unequal outcome. Considerations should be made for court users who are not tech-savvy or who have a preference to communicate with staff in person. **The Superior Court of California in Los Angeles** demonstrates how scheduling appointments can utilize technology to streamline processes for court users while ensuring additional access to users who are not able to or do not feel comfortable using technology.⁸⁵ In addition to the ability to schedule appointments with the clerk and self-help center online or over the phone, court users can also walk in to make an appointment.

Vendors Who Build Customized Technology

NCSC does not endorse any of the following vendors, rather, this non-exhaustive list is provided to assist courts with a starting point for researching vendors.⁸⁶

	Check-In and Kiosk	Queue Management	Online Scheduling
Vendors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adgators • Agilegov • Ecourtdate • Infax, inc. • Advanced Robot Solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agile.gov • Infax, inc • Qmatic • Qtrac 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby Central • Bookings • AdComp Systems

⁸²Internet Broadband Fact Sheet. The PEW Charitable Trusts. Research Center. January 31, 2024. <https://perma.cc/3ML7-6TPH>

⁸³ Tiny Chat 4: Digital Divide. National Center for State Courts. 2020. <https://perma.cc/49QU-Q52P>

⁸⁴ Digital Divide Considerations. National Center for State Courts. September 9, 2020. <https://perma.cc/SS6Q-UKDB>

⁸⁵ AccessLACourt Your Way. The Superior Court of California County of Los Angeles. <https://perma.cc/5545-Y9WG>

⁸⁶ The vendors below were primarily sourced from a document released from the Ohio Judicial Conference's Court Technology Conference in 2023: *Ohio Judicial Conference 2023 Court Technology Conference*. Ohio Judicial Conference. <https://perma.cc/9HGL-FDYY>

Pricing Considerations

The cost of installing check-in, queuing, and wayfinding technology may vary based on the service provided, the quantity needed, and type of software desired. Many of the technologies discussed in this document require an initial payment for the equipment or software, installation costs, and a reoccurring maintenance fee. Technologies that are integrated with an existing case management system may add additional costs.⁸⁷ The following examples are from courts who have reported the costs of various kiosks that have been installed.

- **Madera County, CA Superior Court's** multi-lingual wayfinding kiosks and check-in kiosks cost around \$17,500 for both systems.⁸⁸
- **Montgomery County, OH Domestic Relations Court** reported that the four check-in kiosks they installed cost them \$25,000 and an additional \$3,000 annually for software maintenance.⁸⁹ The judge has said that they have found the kiosks to be cost effective due to the time saved.
- Summit County Council approved a \$55,232 contract for **Summit County, OH Common Pleas Court** to upgrade their current jury system software and install four kiosks to facilitate the check-in process for jurors.⁹⁰
- **Athens County, Oh Common Pleas Court** was awarded a \$34,882 grant to install their check-in kiosks.⁹¹
- For more information on possible funding opportunities, see resources and case studies on [NCSC's Access to Justice team's Funding page](#).

Conclusion

Attending court can be overwhelming for all visitors. Court users may feel intimidated, worried, or anxious as they enter the doors of a courthouse or face a legal hearing. Courts have an opportunity to make navigating a courthouse and the system more straightforward, accessible, and less stressful. Before designing any of the tools discussed in this document, courts should assess their current processes and find ways to simplify them, considering that parts of their processes may not translate to a digital system very well.⁹² It is important to remember that these tools should not replace human interaction, but rather serve as a supplemental service to court

⁸⁷ *Creating a User-Friendly Court Structure and Environment*. National Association for Court Management. 2016. <https://perma.cc/WY3D-E8AW>

⁸⁸ NCSC spoke with Madera County Superior Court's Executive Officer.

⁸⁹ *Court News: Check-In Kiosks Ease Montgomery County Court's Caseflow*. The Ohio Channel. September 8, 2014. <https://www.ohiochannel.org/video/court-news-check-in-kiosks-ease-montgomery-county-courts-caseflow>

⁹⁰ E. Mills. *Summit County Common Pleas Court Adding Juror Check-In Kiosks*. Akron Beacon Journal. December 8, 2021. <https://perma.cc/6XCC-UBEZ>

⁹¹ K. Maloney. *Rethinking Courts*. Court News Ohio. July 2021. <https://www.courtnewsorio.gov/inDepth/2021/July/default.asp>

⁹² *How Courts Embraced Technology, Met the Pandemic Challenge, and Revolutionized Their Operations*. The PEW Charitable Trusts. December 1, 2021. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2021/12/how-courts-embraced-technology-met-the-pandemic-challenge-and-revolutionized-their-operations>

users. Gathering feedback and keeping up with new updates and improved features are crucial to ensuring equal access to justice. These tools and systems can serve as an important benefit to courts, improving services for court users and allowing court staff to offer more attention and support to those who need it. As check-in, queuing, and wayfinding technology continues to progress, courts should leverage their benefits while taking precautions to ensure they meet access to justice, procedural fairness, and data security standards.