

Evolving Access to Idaho's Courts



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“Access to justice” means that every person facing a legal issue has an opportunity to secure their rights under the law, to a fair process in resolving claims, and to the timely and impartial resolution of cases.

Within traditional courthouses, access to justice efforts are often focused on helping people navigate the physical courthouse through ADA accommodations, language access services, and on-site assistance for people representing themselves in court.

As technology improves and innovation provides new and effective ways of delivering access to justice, Idaho's courts are adopting solutions to improve all court users' access to court services throughout the state.

Access to justice efforts now contemplate expanding beyond the physical structure of the courthouse and into the living rooms, workplaces, and theaters of everyday life.

No longer does a brief court appearance need to require a person to take hours off of work, find child care, drive to a courthouse, find parking, or again drive home. Instead, the people of Idaho can access justice using a variety of resources, including remote appearances, that make attending or viewing court proceedings easier and less disruptive of their everyday lives.

Creativity and technology bolster judicial efforts to innovate, providing court users flexibility while maintaining reliable, secure courts.

COURT ACCESS WHEN AND HOW COURT USERS NEED IT

Technology advancements have allowed the courts to meet citizens where they are — incorporating the justice system into Idahoans' daily lives rather than forcing it on them as a significant event.

The judiciary is further investing in videoconferencing and related hardware to hold court remotely or in novel locations. This provides efficient access for both attorneys and parties and maintains the flow of cases. It is but one tool available through Idaho's new era of court access:

- Interpreters can now aid litigants from afar, broadening language access services.
- The Guide & File service continues to evolve, helping self-represented parties understand and submit filings for several important case types. Over 9,350 people used it to open a court case in FY2022.
- Court assistance offices have adapted their service models to provide form reviews over email for people who are representing themselves in court.

The Idaho Supreme Court continues to seek ways to provide access to justice using technology in both conventional spaces and virtual environments.

Public expectations demand that courts continue to modernize and meet court users where they are. Using available technology to make court interactions more efficient and accessible is critical to these expectations.

