



THE ASSOCIATION FOR COURT COMMUNICATORS

What is a PIO?

Court Public Information Officers (PIOs) serve as liaisons between the judiciary and the public and can be found at all levels of the justice system, including the trial courts, appellate courts, and administrative offices of the courts. A court communicator (PIO) is generally responsible for media and public relations, community outreach, education, and publications. A court communicator may also be involved in legislative and governmental affairs, internal communications, law related education, and supervisory management roles, such as overseeing a public information office. Many PIOs have a need to publicize self-help resources for an increasing number of self-represented litigants.

What is CCPIO?

All courts have an interest in increasing public trust and confidence in the courts – delivering fair and impartial justice and being *seen* to deliver fair and impartial justice. The Conference of Court Public Information Officers (CCPIO) is the only professional organization dedicated to the role of court communicators (PIOs) in the United States and worldwide. We provide training, networking opportunities, and professional enhancement tailored to the unique duties of court communicators.

The CCPIO membership includes state, local, and federal PIOs from all levels of courts and administrative offices in the United States and in several other countries.

Who are PIOs?

- More than 70% serve as the spokesperson of their court
- 78% of PIOs are non-attorneys
- 35% have 1-5 years in court communication work and 31% cited more than 15 years of experience. Of those who are new to court communication work, many have been in professional communications roles in media, non-profit, or government roles
- 70% of PIOs work as part of a team, but 39% of those work with only 2-3 people
 - Members believe that CCPIO's top priority is providing continuing education for its members
 - A majority of CCPIO members are interested in leadership development
- 79% of PIOs use some social media platform for their court

The Day to Day

- More than 90% of PIOs work in media relations
 - This work consists of writing press releases and outreach materials, answering media questions, and helping on high profile cases
- More than 80% of PIOs work on website content
 - For example, 70% report providing website upkeep
- More than 80% work in internal communication
 - For example, 54% create/distribute a staff newsletter
- More than 70% of PIOs work in publication writing
 - For example, 54% create/distribute outreach materials for judges and 51% are heavily involved in the creation of an annual report for their court

Audiences

PIOs communicate with a variety of different audiences, including:

- General Public (usually in a particular geographic area)
- Community Leaders and Influencers
- Educators and Students
- Media
- Legislators and Government Officials (for funding support and partnerships)
- Court Participants – litigants, victims, witnesses, jurors
- Attorneys
- Judges and Court Staff

Public Perceptions of the Judiciary

Studies underscore the need for an increased emphasis on judicial education and outreach. In its 2017 national survey, the National Center for State Courts found continuing public skepticism about the courts:

- 47% of respondents believe that judges in their state courts make decisions based on their own beliefs and political pressures
- 53% believe that too many judges in their state courts are there because of personal connections or political influence rather than their qualifications for the job
- 60% of all respondents (78% of African American respondents) believe that too many judges in their state courts don't understand the challenges facing people who appear in their courtrooms and need to do a better job of getting out into the community and listening to people