

National Center for State Courts
Government Relations Office

Public Access to Child Abuse and Neglect Proceedings: Survey Results

State/Territory	Practice Related to Public Access to Proceedings	Hearings to Which Public Has Access	Authority	Year Authorizing Public Access	Practice Related to Public Access to Court Files
Alabama	Presumably closed with judicial discretion to open proceedings	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case file presumably closed with judicial discretion to open all or part of file
Alaska	Closed proceedings for all cases; court has discretion to admit individuals to hearings if their attendance is compatible with the best interests of the child.	N/A	Statute Court Rule	N/A	(no response)
American Samoa					
Arizona	Presumably closed proceedings with judicial discretion to open proceedings	N/A	Statute Court Rule	N/A	Case file presumably closed with judicial discretion to open all or part of file
Arkansas	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	All records may be closed and confidential within the discretion of the court
California	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files closed in all cases
Colorado	Presumably closed proceedings with judicial discretion to open proceedings	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case file presumably closed with judicial discretion to open all or part of file

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Connecticut	Presumably closed proceedings with judicial discretion to open proceedings	Ajudicatory, dispositional, and review hearings	Statute	1969, with subsequent amendments	Case file presumably closed with judicial discretion to open all or part of file
Delaware	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files closed in all cases
District of Columbia	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files closed in all cases; except certain individuals, specified by statute, may be permitted to have access to the records
Florida	Dependency adjudicatory hearings are open to the public, unless the court specifically closes a particular hearing upon a finding that the public interest or welfare of the child are best served by the closure; termination of parental rights adjudicatory hearings are closed to the public	Ajudicatory (for dependency only), dispositional, and review hearings	Statute	1975	Case file presumably closed with judicial discretion to open all or part of file
Georgia	Closed proceedings for all cases; the court may admit any person having a proper interest in the case or the work of the court to hearings	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files closed in all cases; except as permitted by statute

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Guam					
Hawaii	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute (records) Court Rule (hearings)	N/A	Case file presumably closed, judicial discretion to open all or part of file
Idaho	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute Court Rule	N/A	Case files closed in all cases
Illinois	Only persons specified in statute or who in the opinion of the court have a direct interest in the case or the work of the court shall be admitted to hearings; the general public, except for the news media and the victim, are excluded from all hearings; the court may prohibit any person present in the court from further disclosing the minor's identity	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files are closed, except as permitted by statute or special order of the court (statute allows news media to inspect juvenile court records)
Indiana	Presumably open proceedings with judicial discretion to close proceedings (most courts routinely close abuse and neglect proceedings)	Adjudicatory, dispositional, and/or review hearings	Statute	1979	Case file presumably closed, judicial discretion to open all or part of file

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Iowa	Presumably open proceedings with judicial discretion to close proceedings	Adjudicatory, dispositional, and/or review hearings	Statute	1989	Case file presumably closed, judicial discretion to open all or part of file
Kansas	Any person may attend the proceeding upon agreement of all interested parties, unless the court finds the presence of the persons would be disruptive to the proceedings.	Adjudicatory, dispositional, and/or review hearings	Statute	1983	Case file presumably closed, judicial discretion to open all or part of file
Kentucky	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case file closed, except to specific list of individuals. Court may grant access to others upon request and showing cause.
Louisiana	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case file presumably closed with judicial discretion to open all or part of file
Maine	Presumably closed proceedings with judicial discretion to open proceedings	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case file presumably closed with judicial discretion to open all or part of file

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Maryland	Presumably open proceedings with judicial discretion to close proceedings; abuse reports, however, are discussed in a confidential manner in the courtroom	(unspecified)	Statute Court Rule	1998	Case files are closed, except as permitted by statute
Massachusetts	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files are closed; exceptions may be made for research purposes or law enforcement purposes with the permission of the court
Michigan	Presumably open proceedings with judicial discretion to closed	Adjudicatory, dispositional, and review hearings	Court Rule	1988	Case file presumably open with judicial discretion to seal all or part of file (access to records may be limited by local administrative order requiring specific identification of information for files being requested, such as case name or number)
Minnesota	A three-year pilot project in 12 of 87 counties allows child protection hearings in the 12 counties to be presumed accessible to the public unless an exceptional circumstance exists	Adjudicatory, dispositional, and review hearings	Statute Court Rule (authorizes the pilot project)	1998	In the 12 pilot counties, the public may have access to all child protection court files; except the court rules specifically identifies certain records that are not accessible

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Mississippi	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case file presumably closed with judicial discretion to open all or part of file
Missouri	Presumably closed proceedings with judicial discretion to open proceedings	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case file presumably closed with judicial discretion to open all or part of file
Montana	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files are closed, except as permitted by statute
Nebraska	Presumably open proceedings with judicial discretion to close proceedings	Adjudicatory, dispositional, and review hearings	Constitution Court Rule	1875	Case file presumably open with judicial discretion to seal all or part of file
Nevada	Closed proceedings, only persons having a direct interest as ordered by the judge may be admitted	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files are closed; court may publicly disclose information, if necessary
New Hampshire	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	The court may authorize disclosure information.
New Jersey	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute Court Rule	N/A	Case files closed for all cases

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New Mexico	Closed proceedings for all cases; the media is allowed to attend hearings, but not divulge the names of the child, parent, or guardian; other persons with a legitimate interest in the cases or the work of the court may attend hearings provided they receive court permission and refrain from divulging any information that would identify the child or family	Adjudicatory, dispositional, and/or review hearings	Statute	N/A	Case files closed, except as permitted by statute or by order of the court
New York	Presumably open proceedings with judicial discretion to close proceedings	Adjudicatory, dispositional, and/or review hearings	Statute Court Rule	1909 1970	Files not open to “indiscriminate” public inspection, however, the court in its discretion may permit the inspection of any papers or records
North Carolina	Presumably open proceedings with judicial discretion to close proceedings	Adjudicatory, dispositional, and/or review hearings	Statute	1979, amended 1998	Case file presumably closed with judicial discretion to open all or part of file

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North Dakota	Closed proceedings except to declare a person in contempt of court; the court may admit others with proper interest in the case or in the work of the court	N/A	Statute	1999	Case files are closed, except as permitted by statute
Northern Mariana Islands	Presumably open proceedings with judicial discretion to close proceedings	Adjudicatory, dispositional, and/or review hearings	Statute	(unspecified)	Case files closed in all cases
Ohio	Cases are neither “presumptively open, nor presumptively closed, to press or public”.	Adjudicatory, dispositional, and/or review hearings	Constitution Statute Court Rule Case Law	1851 1969 1972 1990	As a general rule, no public use can be made of any juvenile court record, except if there is an appeal, or authorized by court order.
Oklahoma	Presumably closed proceedings with judicial discretion to open proceedings	Adjudicatory, dispositional, and/or review hearings	Statute	1968	Case file presumably closed with judicial discretion to open all of part of file

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Oregon	Public access for all cases	Adjudicatory, dispositional, and review hearings	State Constitution Statute	1859 1980	Case files are closed, except the public has access to the name and date of birth of a child, as well as the basis of the court's jurisdiction over the child. The public also has a right to know the date, time, and place of any court proceeding in which the child is involved.
Pennsylvania	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files closed in all cases
Puerto Rico	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files closed in all cases
Rhode Island	Closed proceedings in all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files closed in all cases
South Carolina	Closed proceedings in all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files closed in all cases
South Dakota	Presumably closed proceedings with judicial discretion to open proceedings	N/A	Statute Case Law	N/A	Case files are closed, except as permitted by statute
Tennessee	Presumably closed proceedings with judicial discretion to open proceedings	N/A	Statute Court Rule	N/A	Case files presumably closed with judicial discretion to open all or part of file

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Texas	Presumably open proceedings with judicial discretion to close proceedings	Adjudicatory, dispositional, and review hearings	Statute Case Law	1995 1992	Case file presumably open with judicial discretion to seal all or part of file
Utah	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files closed in all cases
Vermont	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files closed in all cases
Virginia	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files closed in all cases
Virgin Islands	Presumably closed except to declare a person in contempt of court; the court may admit others with proper interest in the case or in the work of the court on condition that such persons keep information they hear confidential	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files are closed, except as permitted by statute
Washington	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files closed in all cases
West Virginia	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case file presumably closed with judicial discretion to open all or part of file
Wisconsin	Presumably closed proceedings with judicial discretion to open proceedings	(no response)	Statute	(no response)	Case file presumably closed with judicial discretion to open all or part of file

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Wyoming	Closed proceedings for all cases	N/A	Statute	N/A	Case files closed in all cases