

## **General Guidelines to Ensure Public Access to Family Court Proceedings**

Courtrooms in the Family Court are open to the public pursuant to Rule 205.4 of the Uniform Rules of the Family Court. The court must be mindful of the presumption of open access before excluding any person from a Family Court proceeding.

This memorandum provides general guidelines to help ensure public access to Family Court proceedings:

- In a respectful manner, court staff may ask each person who seeks entrance to a courtroom if they are a party, witness, or otherwise associated with a specific calendared case.
- A person who wishes to observe the proceedings will be permitted to sit in the courtroom subject to the limitations of courtroom capacity.
- Courtroom staff will inform the Judge if there is a member of the press or an observer in the courtroom and whether or not he or she has any role in the case.
- When a case is called, the Judge may advise the parties that there is an observer in the courtroom and ask if anyone has an objection.
- On a case-by-case basis, prior to ordering exclusion, the Judge must make findings, based upon supporting evidence, that the exclusion is warranted. The Judge may consider the factors enumerated within Rule 205.4.