



SECURITY OFFICER OPERATIONS FOR TRIBAL COURT


A Tribal Court Security Operations Toolkit — National Native Justice Institute | www.nativejustice.us


■ SECURITY OFFICER OPERATIONS IN TRIBAL COURTS

Tribal court security officers are the operational foundation of a safe justice environment. Their daily duties span access control, prisoner escort, courtroom presence, threat identification, and emergency response. Unlike general security officers, court security specialists operate in a legally complex environment governed by court orders, constitutional rights, due process obligations, and the unique cultural dynamics of tribal justice. Every decision they make can affect proceedings, the rights of parties, and the safety of the entire courthouse.

 Court security officers are the primary safety layer between the public and the judiciary. Their operational competency directly determines the safety of judges, staff, and court users.

 Procedural errors by court security — improper searches, unauthorized use of force, or failure to follow court orders — can result in case dismissal, civil liability, and loss of community trust.

 Shift logs, incident reports, and pre-session checklists are the documentation backbone of a professionally operated court security program.

 Effective court security officers work in partnership with judges, clerks, attorneys, and tribal police — not in isolation.

■ DAILY OPERATIONAL DUTIES

Entry Screening Operations

- Operate entry screening equipment (walk-through magnetometers, hand wands, X-ray if equipped) in accordance with written post orders and court policy.
- Screen every person entering the courthouse: parties, attorneys, witnesses, media, and tribal employees unless specifically exempted by court order.
- Follow a consistent, legally defensible screening protocol. Document any prohibited item found, action taken, and identity of the individual at the time of discovery.
- Know what items are prohibited, what items require court authorization to bring in, and what items are categorically exempt. Post the prohibited items list at each entry point.

Patrol & Access Control

- Conduct regular patrols of all courthouse areas including restrooms, hallways, waiting areas, parking lots, and exterior perimeter during operating hours.
- Control access to restricted areas: judge's chambers, jury rooms, evidence storage, and prisoner holding. Maintain an access log for restricted areas.
- Monitor public waiting areas for signs of conflict, weapons concealment, or individuals who appear to be conducting surveillance of the facility or staff.

Prisoner & Defendant Escort

- Follow written prisoner escort protocols for all in-custody defendants transported to and from the courtroom. Never escort a prisoner alone when the security level is elevated.
- Conduct a search of the prisoner holding area before and after each use. Document findings in writing.
- Position in-custody defendants in the courtroom consistent with your security plan — nearest the security officer with the clearest path to the exit.

End-of-Shift Procedures

- Complete the shift security log documenting all contacts, incidents, screening results, unusual observations, and equipment status.
- Conduct an end-of-shift sweep of all courthouse areas. Secure all restricted areas before departing.
- Brief the incoming shift on any open incidents, known threats, pending hearings, or equipment issues before transferring responsibility.

■ TIPS FOR TRIBAL COURT SECURITY OPERATIONS

- **Standardize Your Screening Protocol** – Inconsistent screening — waving some people through, stopping others arbitrarily — creates both safety gaps and civil rights exposure. Write it down and follow it every time.
- **Maintain a Detailed Shift Log** – A thorough shift log is your best defense against complaints, litigation, and administrative review. Document every contact, every decision, and every unusual observation.
- **Know Every Exit and Restricted Area in the Building** – Conduct a full building walk-through at the start of every new assignment. You cannot navigate effectively in an emergency if you are learning the building during it.
- **Build Relationships with Court Staff** – Court security works best when officers know the clerks, attorneys, advocates, and judges they serve. Relationships build communication channels that prevent incidents.
- **Brief the Incoming Shift Verbally and in Writing** – A thorough shift handoff — both verbal and written — ensures continuity of security awareness and prevents gaps between shifts.
- **Escalate to Tribal Police Promptly** – Know your escalation threshold. Court security handles routine order maintenance. Weapons, assaults, and active threats require law enforcement response immediately.

RESOURCES, GRANTS & SUPPORT

Funding, Training, and Support Resources — Tribal Court Security Officer Operations | www.nativejustice.us

FEDERAL GRANT RESOURCES

Court Security Funding

- **COPS Tribal Resources Grant (TRG)** – Funds tribal public safety including court security staffing, training, and equipment. cops.usdoj.gov/tribalresources
- **CTAS – Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation** – DOJ consolidated tribal funding for courts, law enforcement, and security programs. justice.gov/tribal
- **BJA Tribal Justice Programs** – Supports tribal court operations and court security capacity. bja.ojp.gov/program/tribal-justice
- **FEMA Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program (THSGP)** – Annual DHS funding for tribal security infrastructure and emergency preparedness. fema.gov/tribal

Technical Assistance

- **National Center for State Courts (NCSC)** – Court security operational standards and assessment resources. ncsc.org
- **U.S. Marshals Service Court Security Division** – Federal operational standards and training for courthouse security programs. usmarshals.gov
- **ASIS International** – Global security professional standards including court security certifications. asisonline.org

STATE & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **State Court Security Standards** – Most state court administrative offices publish court security standards applicable to tribal courts under intergovernmental agreements. Contact your State Court Administrator.
- **State Homeland Security Grants (SHSGP)** – Tribal court security programs may be eligible for state-administered FEMA homeland security funding. Contact your State Administrative Agency (SAA).
- **Tribal Law & Order Act (TLOA) Resources** – TLOA expanded tribal justice authority and DOJ technical assistance for tribal courts and security programs.
- **Grants.gov Tribal Search Tool** – Search all federal grants available to tribal entities. grants.gov (filter: Tribal Government eligibility)

HELPFUL TIPS FOR TRIBAL PROGRAMS & LEADERS

<p>Develop Written Standard Operating Procedures Every operational function — entry screening, prisoner escort, patrol, shift handoff — must have a written SOP. Without written procedures, consistency and accountability are impossible.</p>	<p>Conduct Regular Operational Drills Monthly scenario drills — disruption response, medical emergency, active threat — keep operational skills sharp and identify equipment or training gaps before a real incident.</p>
<p>Audit Shift Logs Weekly Supervisors should review shift logs weekly to ensure documentation quality, identify emerging patterns, and provide timely feedback on officer performance.</p>	<p>Equip the Courthouse for Security Operations Walk-through magnetometers, hand wands, two-way radios with courthouse-wide coverage, and body cameras are minimum operational equipment for a tribal court security program.</p>

KEY WEBLINKS

National Native Justice Institute	www.nativejustice.us
National Center for State Courts	ncsc.org
COPS Tribal Resources Grant	cops.usdoj.gov/tribalresources
BJA Tribal Justice Programs	bja.ojp.gov/program/tribal-justice
U.S. Marshals Court Security	usmarshals.gov
ASIS International	asisonline.org
CTAS – DOJ Tribal Assistance	justice.gov/tribal
Grants.gov (Tribal Search)	grants.gov

PARTNER WITH NNJI — WE ARE READY TO SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY

TAKE ACTION TODAY — Contact NNJI at www.nativejustice.us to schedule training, consultation, or access resources.
Strengthening Tribal Justice — One Community at a Time