



# BEST PRACTICES IN TRIBAL COURT SECURITY


A Tribal Court Security Standards Toolkit — National Native Justice Institute | [www.nativejustice.us](http://www.nativejustice.us)


## ■ BEST PRACTICES FOR TRIBAL COURT SECURITY PROGRAMS

Best practices in tribal court security reflect the accumulated wisdom of national court security standards, federal judicial security programs, and the practical experience of tribal courts across Indian Country. They represent a measurable standard that protects personnel and community members, reduces civil liability, and builds the institutional credibility needed to sustain adequate security funding and staffing. Every tribal court — regardless of size — can implement these practices.

 Tribal courts that implement documented, consistently applied security best practices are less likely to experience serious incidents and more effective at responding when incidents do occur.

 Best practice implementation can be measured, audited, and documented — creating the evidence base for grant applications and legislative advocacy for court security funding.

 National standards from the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) and the U.S. Marshals Service provide a recognized framework that tribal courts can adapt to their specific community context.

 Best practice implementation is a team effort involving the presiding judge, court administrator, security supervisor, tribal police liaison, and court personnel.

## ■ ORGANIZATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

### Governance & Policy Foundation

- **Formally Adopt a Court Security Policy** – A formally adopted, written court security policy — approved by the tribal council or court administration — establishes the legal and operational framework for all security functions.
- **Establish a Court Security Committee** – A standing committee including the presiding judge, court administrator, security supervisor, and tribal police liaison provides ongoing oversight and drives continuous improvement.
- **Conduct Annual Court Security Assessments** – An annual self-assessment — or third-party assessment by NCSC, NNJI, or a qualified consultant — measures current security posture against best practice standards and identifies priority improvements.

### Staffing & Training

- **Minimum Staffing Standards** – Establish written minimum daily security staffing levels for the courthouse. Never operate with less than the minimum, regardless of scheduling challenges.
- **Pre-Deployment Training Requirement** – Every court security officer must complete a formal pre-deployment training program before independent duty. Training must include: authority and limits, entry screening, de-escalation, use of force, active shooter response, in-custody management, and report writing.
- **Annual Refresher Training Mandate** – All court security personnel must complete a documented annual refresher training covering policy updates, scenario practice, and any new threat intelligence relevant to the court.

## ■ OPERATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

### Daily Operations

- **Pre-Session Security Sweep** – Document a completed security sweep of all courthouse areas before every court session. This sweep should be completed and signed off by a supervisor or senior officer.
- **Docket Review & Threat Flagging** – Review the daily docket and flag high-risk proceedings. Brief all security and court personnel on flagged cases before the session begins.
- **Consistent Entry Screening** – Screen every person entering the courthouse every day using a documented, consistently applied protocol. No exemptions without written judicial authorization.

### Documentation Standards

- **Shift Log Completion** – Every shift must be documented in a shift log recording contacts, incidents, equipment status, and any unusual observations. Logs must be legible, dated, and signed.
- **Incident Reporting Protocol** – Every security incident must generate a written incident report before end of shift. Reports must be reviewed and retained for a minimum of three years.
- **Use-of-Force Documentation** – Every use of force must be documented in a separate use-of-force report, reviewed by a supervisor, and retained in a dedicated use-of-force file.

## RESOURCES, GRANTS & SUPPORT

Funding, Training, and Support Resources — Tribal Court Security Best Practices Programs | [www.nativejustice.us](http://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](http://cops.usdoj.gov/tribalresources)
- **CTAS – Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation** – DOJ consolidated tribal funding for courts, law enforcement, and security programs. [justice.gov/tribal](http://justice.gov/tribal)
- **BJA Tribal Justice Programs** – Supports tribal court operations and court security capacity. [bja.ojp.gov/program/tribal-justice](http://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](http://fema.gov/tribal)

#### Standards & Technical Assistance

- **National Center for State Courts (NCSC)** – National court security best practices, assessment tools, and technical assistance for tribal courts. [ncsc.org](http://ncsc.org)
- **U.S. Marshals Service – Judicial Security** – Federal judicial security standards and training resources applicable to tribal courts. [usmarshals.gov](http://usmarshals.gov)
- **National Association for Court Management (NACM)** – Professional standards and peer learning network for court administrators including tribal courts. [nacmnet.org](http://nacmnet.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](http://grants.gov) (filter: Tribal Government eligibility)

### ■ HELPFUL TIPS FOR TRIBAL PROGRAMS & LEADERS

<p><b>Request a Formal Court Security Assessment</b></p> <p>An external court security assessment — available through NCSC and NNJI — provides a documented, independent evaluation of your program against national best practices and identifies priority improvements.</p>	<p><b>Adopt the NCSC Court Security Checklist</b></p> <p>The National Center for State Courts publishes a free court security checklist covering policies, staffing, equipment, and operational standards that can be immediately adapted for tribal courts.</p>
<p><b>Develop a Multi-Year Court Security Improvement Plan</b></p> <p>A documented three-to-five year security improvement plan — with specific goals, timelines, and funding strategies — creates accountability and a roadmap for grant applications.</p>	<p><b>Participate in National Court Security Training</b></p> <p>NCSC, the U.S. Marshals Service, and NNJI provide national-level court security training that builds skills, provides peer learning, and demonstrates the professional development commitment that strengthens grant applications.</p>

### ■ KEY WEBLINKS

National Native Justice Institute	<a href="http://www.nativejustice.us">www.nativejustice.us</a>
National Center for State Courts	<a href="http://ncsc.org">ncsc.org</a>
COPS Tribal Resources Grant	<a href="http://cops.usdoj.gov/tribalresources">cops.usdoj.gov/tribalresources</a>
BJA Tribal Justice Programs	<a href="http://bja.ojp.gov/program/tribal-justice">bja.ojp.gov/program/tribal-justice</a>
U.S. Marshals Service	<a href="http://usmarshals.gov">usmarshals.gov</a>
NACM Court Management	<a href="http://nacmnet.org">nacmnet.org</a>
FEMA Tribal Grants	<a href="http://fema.gov/tribal">fema.gov/tribal</a>

### ■ PARTNER WITH NNJI — WE ARE READY TO SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY

**TAKE ACTION TODAY** — Contact NNJI at [www.nativejustice.us](http://www.nativejustice.us) to schedule training, consultation, or access resources.

*Strengthening Tribal Justice — One Community at a Time*