

# WHAT PARENTS AND VISITORS SHOULD KNOW

- Parents and all guests are referred to as visitors.
- Parents meet with your student's teacher coach to learn about practice schedules, transportation to/from the competition, snacks for practices, snacks/lunch for the competition, dress attire for students, travel plans, where to meet for the competition, competition schedule, arrival times, departure time estimations, etc.
- Parents and visitors are welcome to attend the competitions. Competing students, teacher coach(es) and attorney coach(es) wear separate "team" badges. Teams are provided a maximum number of 24 "visitor" badges to watch their team. Visitors cannot view any round without the matching visitor badges which are noted with two coded letters, e.g. "AB." The codes mean nothing. It is a system in place to keep the teams anonymous from the presiding judges, scoring judges, and opposing teams. Visitors receive visitor badges from the lead teacher coach after the teacher registers the team on the day of the competition. All badges are expected to be returned at the end of the competition.
- The team's school, to the extent possible, is kept confidential from the scoring judges. Visitors are not to wear or bring school names, logos, or colors on any items brought into the courtroom. Also, the teams and their visitors only identify themselves by their assigned team codes for the competition, not by the school name.
- Seating is limited in various courtrooms throughout the state. Teams with a large number of visitors will be required to have visitors take turns observing students perform using the limited number of visitor badges provided.

*For example, Johnny is only performing for the Defense side, but the Prosecution/Plaintiff side is currently performing. Parents and visitors associated with Johnny sit out this round if space were limited, so that parents and visitors of the students on the Prosecution/Plaintiff side could watch. The same courtesy is extended when sides switch, should that courtroom present space constraints.*

- Know that teachers receive the order of the performing sides for the first round seven business days prior to the competition; which helps visitors plan for attendance and/or seating space constraints. However, if teams drop out during the seven business days prior to the competition, agendas do change to include the morning of the competition should a team "no show." The agenda is always subject to change.
- Everyone is asked to respect the arrival times, competition round times, breaks and lunch time by never being late. Students are to be in their respective courtrooms 15 minutes prior to each round for in-person competitions and 30 minutes prior for virtual competitions. Many of the courthouses require security to operate the metal detectors for the competitions, which requires additional time for gaining access into the building. (The more pockets, purses, briefcases, bags, etc. that have to be examined, the longer the entry time.) It is suggested for lead teacher coach to have a bag for all things that students absolutely need to bring in the courthouse and the students bring nothing other than their notes. This process speeds up entry into the courthouse.

- All late arrivals present a hardship on the teams. In the event a visitor arrives late, there is staff to assist in finding the assigned courtroom for each team. However, entering or exiting the courtroom should only occur during transitional periods taking place in the courtroom. For example, enter when a witness is getting off of the witness stand and not during an opening, direct, cross, or closing. Each team should have one person stand outside their courtroom and assist in ensuring late arrivals or people leaving during the trial only enter and exit during transitions. This process ensures there is less distraction for the students during the trial.
- An agenda with “approximate” times is provided to the lead teacher coach in advance and on the day of the competition to share with visitors. Times are “approximate” and a round could end earlier or later than estimated, thus causing subsequent breaks, lunch, rounds and awards to be impacted by this shift in time. Even if the round a visitor views ends “on time,” all teams must wait to begin the next round until all teams have completed the same round in order for powermatching for the next round to take place. This wait time may be as much as one hour for the teams that finish the earliest.
- If a visitor knows in advance that s/he is only coming to see the one round his/her student is performing in, plan to arrive 15 – 30 minutes prior to the “approximate” start time to ensure a seat in the courtroom as times are not “fixed” and can vary. Visitors planning on arriving for only one round are strongly encouraged to leave their cell phone number with the lead teacher in case the agenda changes on the morning of the competition.
- Visitors are not allowed to move around the courtroom during a trial or participate in any way to include asking about time used, signaling, passing notes, mouthing to students, raising disputes, or arguing a dispute on behalf of the student(s).
- It is strongly encouraged that cell phones are not brought to the courthouse and/or Mock Trial facility. Some courthouses prohibit the possession of cell phones and are confiscated by security personnel. Should a cell phone be permitted into the courthouse, it is asked for all cell phones be turned off while in the courtroom. Cell phones or any other technology is not permitted in front of the bar.
- Video cameras may be used during the competition only with the consent of the host facility, the presiding judge and with the consent of the opposing team. The presiding judge asks for consent from both teams prior to beginning the trial. Flash pictures may not be taken during the competition at any time. (In the past, some teams have nominated one parent from a team to film all of the rounds and share the video with everyone on that team following the competition.)
- The SC Bar promotes each competition statewide and sends press releases to all media outlets. Media may be on-site at a competition.
- Teams are notified in advance in the event that there are an odd number of teams participating in a given regional competition that requires a team to become a “bye” team during a round. See information about a bye round in the rules section of the Mock Trial Competition Handbook (Rule 5.8 – Bye Round)

- In general, there are very few, if any, restaurants within walking distance of the competition locations. Students stay on the competition grounds and visitors either bring prepared lunch or have lunch delivered to the team.
- The presiding judge allows up to a five minute recess prior to the closing arguments. Everyone behind the bar can leave the courtroom at that time, but may not communicate with any of the competing team members in front of the bar. All students in front of the bar remain in the courtroom and do not communicate with anyone behind the bar. Students in front of the bar may talk amongst themselves. Visitors that leave during the break risk not being able to re-enter the courtroom in the event both teams are prepared to start their closing arguments prior to the end of the five minute recess.
- Any concerns, issues or feedback discussed with the State and/or Regional Mock Coordinator is to be made solely by the lead teacher coach and/or the lead attorney coach. Any communication not from either of these two coaches is considered to be in non-compliance and is subject to penalties according to Rule 3.9 (Communication with Mock Trial Coordinators) and Rule 6.4 (Discipline for Non-Trial Rules Violations). This rule is in place before and during the competition. All post-competition communication is solely by the lead teacher coach and/or attorney coach directed to the State Coordinator only. There is no reaching out to judges or Regional Coordinators post competition. Any post-competition communication not directed to the State Coordinator subjects the team to penalties up to disqualification the following school year.
- There is a closing assembly at the end of the competition day and visitors are welcome to attend. It is strongly encouraged that everyone is in the assigned meeting area for the closing assembly at least thirty minutes prior to the start time in case the awards preparation happens sooner than planned. Attorneys, teachers, students, and visitors do not want to miss the closing assembly.
- During this assembly, the most effective attorney and most effective witness from each round nominated by the scoring judges are announced and concludes with the announcement of the “proposed” top team in that region to advance to the state competition along with the next two highest teams as information only. Being announced as second and third place teams does not guarantee automatic advancement to the state competition. In addition, the Professionalism and Civility Award (determined by team nominations) will be awarded. All scoresheets are confirmed and the official teams advancing to the state competition are announced by 5pm the Tuesday following the regional competitions. There are a total of 12 teams that advance to the state competition to include a top team from each regional competition and the remaining slots are filled with wild card teams. Wild card teams are the teams with the next highest wins, ballots, points, and point spread out of all the regional competitions.
- Teams along with their visitors should block their calendar with the state competition dates in the event their team advances to the state competition – even if it is a first-year team. Should a team be selected to advance to the state competition, it is very important that the team stays together when advancing to the next level of competition. Should the team not be able to advance to the state competition due to not enough team members available, the team forfeits its slot and is awarded to the next highest placing team in the state. For this reason, three back-up teams are announced along with the top twelve advancing teams.