Administrative Office of the Courts

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New "justice stations" in northwestern New Mexico improve access to state courts

GALLUP – Newly installed "justice stations" on the Navajo Nation and communities in northwestern New Mexico provide virtual access to magistrate court hearings, lessening the need for people to travel to a courthouse.

The justice stations allow the public to use an easy-to-navigate computer to appear remotely in a hearing conducted by one of the magistrate courts in San Juan and McKinley counties, such as in a case involving a traffic violation.

Justice stations are available for use at the Rock Springs Chapter House, the Beclabito Chapter House, Octavia Fellin Public Library in Gallup, and the Gallup Magistrate Court. They also will be in place by the end of December at the Aztec Public Library, the Bloomfield Public Library, the Farmington Public Library, and the People Assisting the Homeless (PATH) shelter in Farmington.

"By using a justice station, people can conduct business with a state court when they have no internet connection at their homes or lack reliable cellular phone service," said Eleventh Judicial District Chief Judge Curtis Gurley. "The justice stations offer more convenience for people who otherwise would need to go to Gallup, Farmington or Aztec for a court hearing."

State Supreme Court Chief Justice C. Shannon Bacon said the justice stations represent another initiative by courts to use technology to meet the needs of New Mexicans with legal issues.

"Justice stations expand access to the justice system to enable people to protect their rights and advocate for their interests if they have a legal problem," said Chief Justice Bacon.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, New Mexico courts have increasingly conducted hearings online through video conferencing platforms rather than requiring the parties to appear in person at a courthouse.

The Eleventh Judicial District Court is collaborating with public and private entities to establish the justice stations throughout the district. The court supplies the needed computer equipment, software, signage and technical assistance during installation. It also maintains the equipment. The private and public entities provide internet service and space for the court's computer equipment in their buildings.

Currently, the justice stations can be used for all proceedings in a traffic case and for pretrial hearings in misdemeanor and civil cases in magistrate courts in McKinley and San Juan counties, including cases involving misdemeanor charges of drunken driving (DWI). The justice stations are not available for domestic violence cases in the district and for hearings in courts outside of the two counties that make up the Eleventh Judicial District.

The court designed the justice stations to streamline computer navigation, allowing users to connect to a hearing with a single touch on the screen of the computer's monitor or one click of a computer mouse. Users need to know the date and time of their hearing and the judge presiding over their case.

"Our goal is to establish more justice stations, particularly in rural areas, and expand the types of court business that can be conducted at them," said Chief Judge Gurley.

The Rock Springs Chapter House is about 10 miles northwest of Gallup, near the state border with Arizona. The Beclabito Chapter House is located on Highway 64, four miles east of the Arizona border and 18 miles west of Shiprock. Both Chapter houses are open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and are closed for lunch during the noon hour.

The Octavia Fellin Public Library in Gallup is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday starting at 10 a.m., and Wednesday from 11 a.m.

The justice station in the Gallup Magistrate Court allows visitors to use computer equipment in the lobby to appear in a remotely conducted hearing in another magistrate court in the district. The court is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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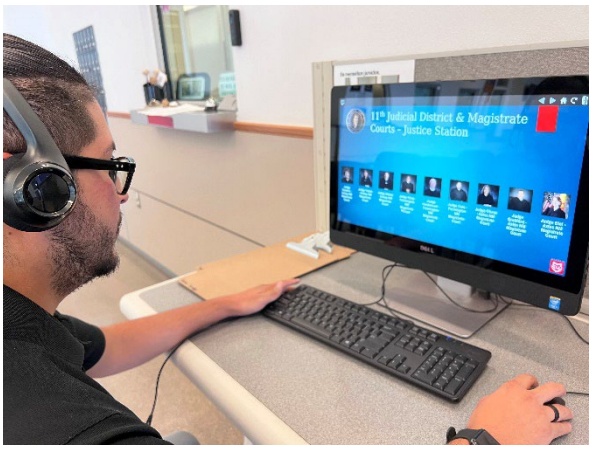
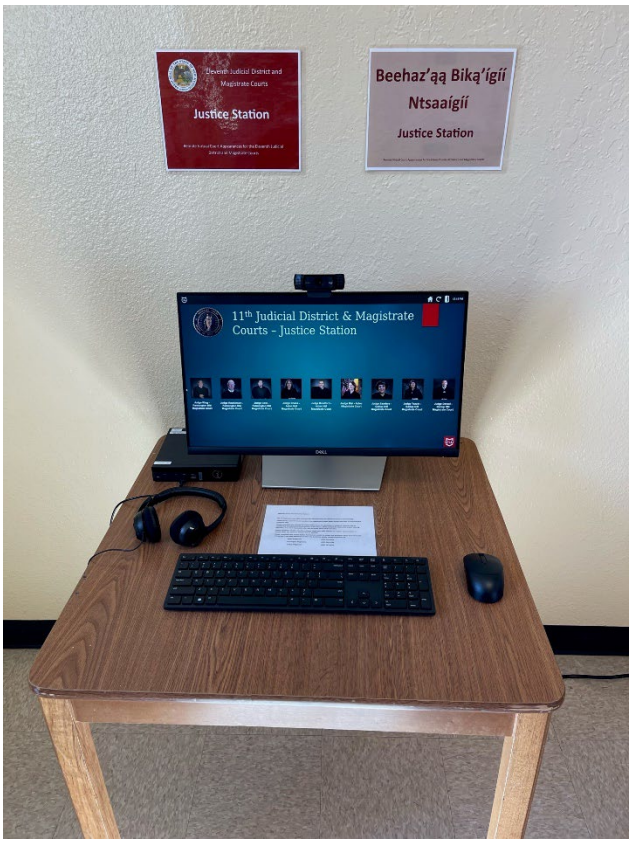


Bailiff Bulmaro Ramirez demonstrates use of the justice station at the Gallup Magistrate Court.



Justice station installed at the Rock Springs Chapter House on the Navajo Nation.

The display on a justice station computer monitor. Members of the public touch the screen or click a mouse to select the judge and court for their virtual hearing, and then will be connected to it.