

Mecklenburg County Courthouse Guided Tour Policy and Guidelines

SCHEDULING

Advanced notice is required to schedule a guided tour of the Mecklenburg County Courthouse. Walk-in requests for guided tours on the same day are not available. Guided tours are scheduled subject to the availability of the Community Access & Outreach Administrator and/or staff.

To arrange a guided tour of the Mecklenburg County Courthouse in advance, contact the Community Access & Outreach Division by email Mecklenburg.CAO@nccourts.org at least ten (10) business days prior to the date you wish to take the tour.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- 1) Guided tours of the Mecklenburg County Courthouse are conducted during normal business hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) on *Fridays only*.
- 2) You must be at least eleven (11) years of age in order to take a guided tour of the courthouse.
- 3) A guided tour can accommodate no more than 15 people at one time, *including any teachers, parents, and/or chaperones*.
- 4) No more than two guided tours will be conducted during a single day.
- 5) A tour generally takes about one hour, depending upon the number of questions. Please keep this in mind when planning arrival and departure times.
- 6) As a rule, cameras and filming are not allowed inside the courthouse without prior authorization. If you would like to bring a camera(s) and take photos for presentation purposes in designated areas only, please complete the application to film and submit it to the Community Access and Outreach Division 72 hours prior to the date of the tour by email to Mecklenburg.CAO@nccourts.org.
- 7) Weapons or any objects that could be used as weapons are not allowed inside the courthouse. These include scissors, sharp hair picks, knitting needles, pocket knives, etc. These items will be confiscated at the security posts and will not be returned. All bags, bookbags, purses, etc. will be scanned for contraband. Please inform the Sheriff of any electronic devices you may have in your bag.

8) All courtrooms are open to the general public, with the exception of the Juvenile courtrooms on Level 8. You are welcome to take your group into a courtroom once the tour is over. The tour leader can suggest which courtrooms to observe, but will not accompany your group during courtroom observations. Keep in mind that certain types of trials and the testimony and/or evidence involved in them may include graphic descriptions, foul and/or explicit language, and/or graphic video, photographs, and/or audio recordings.

PARKING

Public parking for court visitors is available at the 4th Street Parking Deck, which is located at the intersection of 4th and McDowell Streets. The public entrance to the parking deck is on 4th Street, directly across from the 3rd and 4th Street / I-277 / John Belk Freeway exit ramp. As you enter the deck, punch for a ticket. *We cannot validate parking for tour groups.*

ONCE YOU HAVE PARKED: Using the crosswalk, cross over McDowell Street. Enter the Mecklenburg County Courthouse through the entrance on McDowell Street. All visitors must go through a security checkpoint. You must remove all metals from your person, including belts and steel toed shoes.

Students may off-load and load in the drop-off circle behind the Mecklenburg County Courthouse. The driveway is located just past the courthouse on the left on 4th Street. **Large buses will not be able to enter and navigate the circle**, but there is room to turn around before entering the circle. *You will need to make your own accommodations for bus parking, as there is no bus parking available in the courthouse parking deck.*

ARRIVAL

Please make every effort to arrive on time. If you are running late, please notify the Community Access and Outreach Division as soon as possible. Tour groups that arrive late will only receive a partial tour. ***Tours may NOT be extended due to a late arrival.*** Please allow time for any bus drivers who plan to join the tour to park the bus and arrive with the entire group at the agreed upon start time. Tours will begin in the lobby on Level One of the courthouse.

CANCELLATION POLICY

If you must cancel a tour, please notify the Community Access and Outreach Division via email at Mecklenburg.CAO@nccourts.org immediately. Your tour will be rescheduled subject to the availability of court staff.

CHAPERONES

We request that a minimum of one (1) chaperone for every ten (10) students be provided and a maximum of four (4).

RESTROOMS

If your group needs to use the restroom facilities before the tour begins, please let the tour leader know as soon as you arrive. Restrooms and water fountains are located on each level of the courthouse.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The courthouse is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If any member of your group requires any type of accommodation, please indicate this when scheduling the tour.

COURTHOUSE RULES FOR STUDENT GROUPS

All of these rules are intended to keep visitors safe and enable them to enjoy their educational experience. It is important to remember that the courthouse is a place where citizens conduct official business which must be done so in an orderly manner without outside disruption. *Please share the following rules with your students and ALL of the adults attending the tour.*

- 1) No running, jumping, or shouting is allowed inside the courthouse. Students are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner so as not to disrupt the operations of the court. The tour leader is not responsible for their conduct or safety while inside the courthouse. Students who are loud, wander off, or deface any property, or are otherwise disruptive while in the building are subject to being escorted out of the building by the Sheriff.
- 2) Students may not leave the tour at any time unless accompanied by a chaperone.
- 3) Please use inside voices at all times so as not to disturb other visitors or disrupt court.
- 4) We encourage questions during the tour, but please be courteous to others. Please do not talk while the tour leader is talking. If you have a question, please raise your hand.
- 5) Appropriate clothing should be worn during the tour and should not display offensive images, symbols, words, etc.
- 6) Students are expected to follow the directions and suggestions of the tour leader.

Expectations for Chaperones and Teachers

- 1) We ask that chaperones and teachers refrain from visiting with each other or talking on the phone when the tour leader is speaking to the students.
- 2) Please assist the tour leader when there are behavior and/or noise issues.