

February 8, 2016; What to find where at court

So, you've just gotten a speeding ticket. Or, you're required to submit a court clearance with a job application. Or maybe you've been served with notice to appear for a child support hearing. This means you've got to make your first dreaded trip to the Superior Court. You wonder, "How do you get there? What do I do and where do I go once I get there?"

First, let's get you there. The actual street address for the Guam Judicial Center is 120 West O'Brien Drive, Hagatna. However, for security reasons the public must enter the complex through the back entrance located on Chalan San Ramon. This side street parallels West O'Brien and can be entered from either Chalan Obispo, the street that ends (or starts) at the Academy of Our Lady School, or from the Agana Shopping Center side. However, if you enter on the Agana Shopping Center side, you must immediately turn right into the court parking lot because from this entrance the street becomes one-way, going the opposite direction.

At times, parking can be a challenge, especially if jurors have been called to duty. For this reason, if you're going to a hearing, I strongly recommend that you arrive at least twenty to thirty minutes early to allow ample time to find parking.

As you open the door to the Judicial Center, you will be required to empty your pockets and deposit all hand-carry items into a plastic tray. These items will pass through a scanner similar to those used at airports. You'll then be instructed to walk through the metal detector. If the alarm is triggered a court Marshal will pass a scanner wand over your body.

You enter the building on the first floor. The Center consists of three floors, plus a basement. The basement houses the Marshal's Security and Facilities Maintenance sections.

Straight ahead from the entrance is an information desk. Employees there can assist you with directions or answer any questions you may have.

About 40 feet past the metal detector, you can turn either left or right. A left hand turn brings you into the rotunda where you'll find the courtrooms of Judges James L. Canto II, Michael J. Bordallo, and Anita A. Sukola. You will notice that outside each courtroom an electronic board lists all court hearings for that day.

If you instead turn right past the metal detector, you'll see the Child Support courtroom immediately on your left. This is where Judge Linda Ingles hears all child support matters. Further down the wide hall you'll see another set of electronic boards on your left. These list the hearings for all judges.

As you exit the hallway, you'll enter into a large room that houses the court's main administrative outlets. To your left, you will see the service counters for child

support, small claims, traffic tickets and the Court filing-intake desk, where legal documents are filed. You can also obtain court clearances here. Just past the filing desk, you'll see a door leading to the file room where you may request to review and copy any public court file.

The court cashiers are located opposite the service counters. All payments are made here. They accept cash, checks, or credit cards. Just to the right of the cashiers you will notice self-help computers where you can prepare your own legal documents for certain matters. Next to the computers is an ATM machine.

If you retrace your steps back to the information counter, you can either take the stairs or the elevator up to the second floor. The courtrooms for Judges Alberto C. Lamorena III, Maria T. Cenzon, Arthur Barcinas and Vernon Perez are located on the rotunda side. The Small Claims courtroom of Referee Benjamin C. Sison, Jr. is located on the opposite side from the rotunda, along with Client Services & Family Counseling, the Jury Unit, and the ethics prosecutor.

Again, using the stairs or elevator, you can ascend to the third floor which houses the courtroom and administrative offices for the Guam Supreme Court. The chambers of the three Supreme Court Justices, Robert J. Torres, Katherine A. Maraman, and F. Philip Carbullido are located here as well.

Other court services are housed at the Northern Court Satellite building located at the Dededo Mall behind Taco Bell. This is where Magistrate Alberto Tolentino conducts all criminal magistrate hearings and arraignments. You can also pay traffic fines and request court clearances here. Small claims cases are heard here for parties living in the north.

If you need help, don't hesitate to ask any court employee. Although I may be a bit biased, I think you'll find Judicial Center employees among the most helpful, friendliest, and competent of all Government of Guam employees.