



TEXT APPLICATION USAGE

I. POLICY:

Authorized text messaging services shall be used as a method of providing written notification of court appearance obligations to defendants and may be used as a method of contacting collateral contacts identified by a defendant during the pretrial investigation interview.

II. AUTHORITY:

Pretrial Services Act 725 ILCS 185/14, 25

SUPPORTING MATERIALS:

Illinois Supreme Court Technology Security and Usage Policy
Cooke et al. (2018). Using Behavioral Science to Improve Criminal Justice Outcomes: Preventing Failure to Appear Rates.

III. PROCEDURE:

- A. Text messages may be used after interviewing defendants to schedule a phone call with each collateral contact provided by the defendant regarding verification of the defendant's criminal record, residency, and employment circumstances for the Pretrial Investigation Report.
 1. OSPS staff may utilize their state issued phone for text message notifications.
 2. Text message notifications should read, "This is Pretrial Services Officer, *insert name*, requesting a phone call with you at the request of, *defendant first name only*, to verify information for an upcoming court hearing. Please call this number or confirm when you would be able to accept a phone call. Thank you."
- B. Text messages shall be used to send court reminders to defendants, at minimum one text, one business day prior to a court appearance. All text messages shall be sent during regular business hours.
 1. OSPS staff may utilize their state issued phone, and/or approved software applications for text reminders.
 2. Text message should read, "This is a Pretrial Services reminder that you have court on *date/time/place*. Missing court can lead to your arrest. Please make necessary arrangements so you can be there."
 - i. The text message may include directions on reporting to the pretrial officer before or after court, as applicable.
 - ii. When court is scheduled remotely, include connection information.



Office of Statewide Pretrial Services
Policy and Procedure
Effective Date: 11/18/2022, Revised 08/14/2023

- C. Text messaging court reminders shall be scheduled in advance to be delivered the day prior for a Monday court appearance or before a holiday.
- D. Chat logs and individual texts shall not be deleted.
- E. Full names and any other personal identifiers of the defendant shall not be used in the text message.
- F. When a defendant or collateral contact does not have texting abilities, other methods of communication may be utilized.
- G. Pretrial best practices research (Cooke et al., 2018) recommends using behavioral text messages to reduce failure to appear rates. Text message examples below:
 - 1. 7 days before court, " Helpful reminder: go to court on *date/time*. We'll text you again to help you remember. Show up to avoid an arrest warrant."
 - 2. 3 days before court, "You have court on *date/time/place*. What time should you leave by to get there on time? Do you have any other arrangements to make? Write out your plan."
 - 3. 1 day before court, "Remember, you have court tomorrow at *time*. Missing court can lead to your arrest."