CTRL & Serve:
Tech Tools for Civil Process

Lt. James Slack – Montgomery County, Pct. 4
Office of Constable Kenneth "Rowdy" Hayden

1

Funded By a Grant From the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals

2

Agenda

- Practical AI Use
- Social Media
- Electronic Service
- Electronic Record Retention
- Wrap-Up

Welcome & Setup

- Wi-Fi:
  - Network: Hilton Honors Embassy Meeting
  - Password: TJCTC26
- Devices: phone is fine — pair up if needed
- Download app: ChatGPT and/or Gemini

Poll #1

Have you used ChatGPT or similar before?

- Yes
- A little
- Not at all

5

Poll #2

What would you most like help with?

- Press releases
- Award nominations
- Social media
- Reports / emails
- Other

6

What Is AI, Really?

- AI (for our purposes) is advanced pattern matching and text prediction.

- It generates *plausible* language — it does not "know" facts like a person does.

- Use it to speed up drafting, brainstorming, tone, and formatting.

- Do not use it as a substitute for legal review, verification, or investigative judgment.

7

AI: What It's Good At vs. What It's Not

Good at
- First drafts (press releases, notices, emails)

- Rewriting for clarity and tone

- Checklists, outlines, and templates

- Summarizing non-sensitive text

- Ideas + variations (shorter/longer/more formal)

Not good at
- Guaranteeing accuracy

- Providing legal advice or "final answers" on procedure

- Making policy decisions

- Handling sensitive/confidential data

- Replacing training, supervision, or documentation

8

Access + Cost: Free vs. Paid Tools

- Free tools are often enough for basic drafting and rewriting.

- Paid tools may add: better models, file uploads, organization features, admin controls, or security options.

- Decide based on: workload volume, staffing, record sensitivity, and budget.

- **Group Discussion:** "What does your office currently use and how did you get access?"

9

Prompting Basics

- Give context: who you are, what you're doing, and who the audience is.

- Be specific: length, tone, purpose, and key facts.

- Set constraints: plain English, no legal advice, no guessing.

- Iterate: "shorter," "more formal," "for Facebook," "add a checklist," etc.

Example: Bad Prompt ❌

"Write a press release about an arrest."

Why it's bad (speaker note):
- No audience
- No tone
- No constraints
- Encourages guessing or adding facts

Example: Good Prompt ✅

"You are helping a Texas constable's office.
Write a short public press release about an arrest using only the facts provided.
Audience: local residents.
Tone: professional and easy to understand.
Length: 3–4 short paragraphs.
Do not add facts or legal advice."

10

Demonstration

- **Role:** "Constable or deputy in X County"

- **Task:** "Draft an e-mail."

- **Audience + tone:** "JP; professional and easy to understand."

- **Constraints:** "3–4 short paragraphs; plain English; do not add facts; no legal advice."

- **Facts:** "Use only the facts below: I received a writ of retrieval but one of the items (a television) listed for retrieval is not allowed by law. I need to know if the JP wants to recall and amend the writ or is directing me to execute it.

- **Refine as needed:** "shorter," "more formal," "add a quote," "add a call for tips."

- **Before you're finished:** accuracy checks, policy, legal review, and records retention.

11

Hands-On Exercise: Social Media Post Draft

- *Scenario:* Office will be closed for the holidays.

- Include Role, Task, Audience, Tone, Constraints, Facts (days of closure, location of office, how people can contact the office/leave a message).

    - Do NOT include: personal phone number, personal travel plans, anything confidential.

- Refine as needed/check everything.

12

Debrief

- 1–2 volunteers to read one strong sentence from their draft.

- What edits did you still need to make?

- Where did the AI try to guess facts?

- What prompt change improved the output the most?

How Can AI Help Us in a Constable's Office?

- Press releases & media statements

- Award and recognition nominations

- Social media posts & event announcements

- Internal emails, memos, and citizen letters

- Training materials and outlines (FTO tools, lesson plans, checklists)

- Anything else?

Guardrails: Ethics, Privacy, and Policy

- Do not paste sensitive data (juveniles, protected health info, SSNs, full DOBs, sealed records, etc.).

- AI is a drafting assistant — not an official record or decision-maker.

- Always review for: accuracy, tone, and legal/policy compliance.

- Records: prompts/outputs may be subject to retention and public information rules — confirm with your county attorney.

- If in doubt: remove identifying details and re-write generically.

15

Discussion Question

What is your biggest concern about AI in your office?

16

Social Media and Civil Process

Why Social Media Matters for Civil Process Offices

- Facilitates good communication.

- Builds trust with the public and stakeholders.

- Shares safety/community information (within policy).

- Supports transparency while protecting privacy.

- Requires consistency: tone, accuracy, and approvals.

Potential Topics

- Sets expectations: hours, contact methods, and service limitations

- Public safety announcements

- Traffic and road closure information

- Arrest information where permitted by law and policy

- Community engagement and events

- **Others?**

Social Media Use in the U.S. (Recent Data)

- **Most-used platforms by U.S. adults:**
  – YouTube (~80%), Facebook (~70%), Instagram (~50%), TikTok (~35%)

- **Who uses social media the most:**
  – Ages 18–29: highest overall use (Instagram & TikTok)
  – Ages 30–49: Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube
  – Ages 50+: Facebook and YouTube

Social Media as a News Source

- Over half of U.S. adults get news from social media.
- Adults under 30 rely heavily on Instagram and TikTok.
- Public safety messaging often reaches the public first online.
- Primary communication channel for many government offices.
- 96% of users access social media on mobile devices.
- **Why this matters for constables:**
  - The public expects timely information on social media.
  - Posts—good or bad—spread faster than traditional media.

21

Best Practices

- Posts must be accurate, timely, and professional.
- Do not release confidential or restricted information.
- Remember everything posted is public.
- Maintain professionalism in all interactions.
- Think before posting or responding to comments (500-foot view).
- Follow agency policy and training.
- Personal accounts can still impact the office.

22

Official vs. Private Accounts

- Blurring roles can create legal and liability risks.

- Avoid invoking official authority on personal pages.

- Use disclaimers appropriately and consistently.

Social Media: Practical Do's and Don'ts

Do
- Use plain language; explain what the office can/can't do.

- Follow a review/approval process for public posts.

- Use consistent branding and templates.

- Respond professionally (even to negative comments).

- Archive posts/messages per retention guidance.

Don't
- Post confidential info (juveniles, victims, protected data).

- Speculate, argue, or "live update" sensitive incidents.

- Use sarcasm that can be misread.

- Delete comments before retention period is over.

- Assume DMs are private or not public record.

Scenario Exercise: When a Post Goes Wrong

- *Date:* December 22

- *Weather:* Cloudy and 35 degrees.

- *Post:* "After a two-month long process, deputies were finally able to execute a writ of possession in the Maple Creek neighborhood and evict a tenant with a lengthy criminal history."

- *Reaction:* The post goes viral. Numerous comments about how the person will now be homeless right before Christmas and when it is really cold outside. Numerous comments about why does the office need to put people on blast when they're already losing their home. Numerous comments about how people with criminal histories still have to live somewhere.

Group Discussion: **How would you handle this? Try using AI to see how it might help.**

25

AI Tie-In: Social Media (with Guardrails)

- Drafting posts faster (then human review for accuracy/policy).

- Rewriting for tone: calm, professional, and clear.

- Creating multiple versions: Facebook vs. X vs. Instagram.

- Drafting "frequently asked questions" responses.

- Important: never paste sensitive details; keep prompts generic.

26

Electronic Service for Civil Process

Using Technology to Find People

- Use county-approved resources and follow policy

- Examples include:

  – TLO / investigative databases

  – Local Real-Time Crime Centers

  – Social media platforms

- What tools does your office currently use?

Poll #3

How long has service been explicitly allowed via social media?

- What? It isn't!
- Since this last session in 2025.
- Since 2020.
- It has always been allowed.

Alternative Service via Electronic Means

- Used when traditional service is unsuccessful.

- The 2020 legislative session changed CPRC 17.033 to include social media. TRCP 106(b) was then also updated to allow courts to authorize service:

  "In any other manner, *including electronically by social media, email, or other technology*, that the statement or other evidence shows will be reasonably effective to give the defendant notice of the suit."

- In the rules specific to justice courts, TRCP 501.2(e)(2) allows service in small claims by "any method that the court finds is reasonably likely to provide the defendant with notice of the suit" (which could include service by social media).

Discussion: Electronic Service vs. Publication

- Which is more likely to reach the defendant?

  o People are often concerned about whether electronic service is effective/fair. The alternative – when there are no other options – is service by publication.

  o Which is more effective, electronic service or service by publication? Why?

31

Service by Social Media – Procedure

- Create or access platform specified by court

- Attach scanned service documents

- Send via messaging feature

- Use platform date/time for officer's return

32

16

Social Media Platforms Commonly Used

- Facebook
- Instagram
- X (Twitter)
- LinkedIn

33

Service by Text Message or WhatsApp

- Court provides verified phone number or account
- Attach scanned documents
- Use platform date/time for return

34

Service by Email

- Court provides verified email address
- Send scanned process documents
- Use email outbox date/time for return

Important Notes on Electronic Service

- Adequacy of service determined by the court
- Receipt confirmation may not be available
- Any response supports effectiveness of service
- Electronic service can speed up delivery and reduce missed communications.
- Follow current Texas rules/statutes and local court requirements.
- Always keep proof, logs, and timestamps as part of the file.

Electronic Service: Workflow Checklist

Before you serve
- Confirm eligibility (rule/order/statute)
- Confirm the correct recipient + address
- Verify identity/authority when required
- Prepare service packet and required notices
- Plan how you will document service

After you serve
- Capture proof (system receipt, timestamp, confirmation)
- Document method + details in your return
- Save copies to the case file (retention)
- Handle bounce-backs or failed service promptly
- Notify supervisor/court as required

37

AI Tie-In: Electronic & Alternate Service

- Use AI to draft checklists, return templates, and internal SOPs (no sensitive data).

- AI can assist with drafting and documentation tasks.

- AI does not replace court authority or legal judgment.

- Draft motions requesting alternative/electronic service/Organize facts demonstrating reasonable notice.

- Draft clear service return narratives.

- Improve clarity and professionalism of reports.

38

AI Guardrails: Electronic & Alternate Service

- Do not enter confidential or protected information into AI tools.

- All AI output must be reviewed for accuracy and compliance.

- Final responsibility remains with the officer and court.

39

Electronic Records Retention for Civil Process

40

Maintaining Electronic Records

- See Bulletin B: Electronic Records Standards and Procedures:
https://www.tsl.state.tx.us/slrm/recordspubs/lgbullb.html

- You must be able to access the electronic version **for the full retention period.**

41

Source Document Destruction

- See Bulletin B, §205.008. Destruction of Source Documents
- Before destroying original, test:
  - That electronic version is complete and of good quality.
  - That you are able to find and pull up the electronic version when needed.
- If using a new software system, keep source documents for at least six months until you are sure the system is working properly.

42

Understanding Electronic Retention

Remember:
The retention period is based on the **content**
rather than the **format** of a record.

43

Managing E-mail

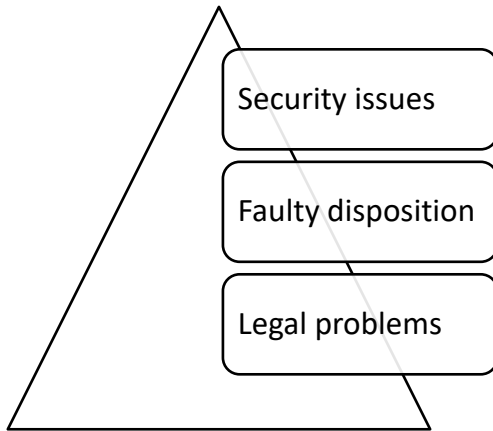Only send it if you need to.

Remember it is open to the public.

One subject per message.

Effective subject line

Stick to the subject when
forwarding.

44

Using Your Personal E-mail?

Security issues

Faulty disposition

Legal problems

Social Media in Public Records Law

Records laws are "future proof" because technology changes.

Texas Public Information Act includes "Internet posting."

A record is a record whether it is sent by letter, e-mail, or tweet.

Applying the Law

Social Media is public record.

Third-party content, such as replies
and comments, is also record.

No deleting posts or comments before
the retention period is over!!

AI Tie-In: Record Retention

- Summarize large volumes of records for review.

- Create naming conventions and indexing suggestions.

- Assist with training documentation standards.

- Draft retention-related SOP language.

- Assist with responses to public information requests.

- Help identify missing documentation.

AI Guardrails: Records Retention

- Do not upload confidential or restricted records.

- AI output is not an official record.

- Final responsibility remains with the agency.

49

Resources

- https://www.tjctc.org/
    - Civil Process Field Guide and other deskbooks
    - Webinars, self-paced modules, forms
    - SRL packets, self-help resources for the public, etc.
- https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/ - Statutes and Constitution
- https://www.txcourts.gov/rules-forms/rules-standards/ - TRCP
- https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ - Texas State Library & Archives Commission
- Your county/agency: social media policy, records retention schedule, and IT guidance

50

Takeaways

- Tech should reduce friction in service workflows — not add steps.

- AI can speed drafting, but humans own accuracy, policy, and ethics.

- Documentation + retention is your long-term protection.

- **Questions?**

51