# FJC Courtroom Use Study
## Final Report Technical Appendices


## Technical Appendix Five

## About DISCUS

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# Courtroom Use Study

# About DISCUS

# Data Input System for the Courtroom Use Study

**Federal Judicial Center**

**2007**

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# About DISCUS

During the Courtroom Use Study staff in the participating districts used a specially-developed software application called DISCUS (Data Input System for the Courtroom Use Study) to enter scheduling and actual use information for the courtrooms in their district.  Prior to the start of the data collection period, a training team was sent to each district to teach court staff how to use the DISCUS application.  This appendix is one of the training documents used in the Wave 2 courts.  Similar materials were used for the Wave 1 training.  This document provides an overview of the features of the DISCUS application and gives basic instructions on how to enter both scheduling and actual use information.

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# What Is DISCUS?

DISCUS is the Data Input System for the Courtroom Use Study. It is a software application built in Lotus Notes. Court staff who record information for the Courtroom Use Study will record the information into DISCUS.

The software application has two components—referred to as "modules." The Scheduling module is the place where court staff record certain types of events scheduled for the future. The Actual Use module is the place where court staff record events that have taken place in courtrooms and certain other events that happen in other places.

The following sections describe more fully the DISCUS capabilities and the study requirements.

For staff in the Wave 2 districts, the data collection dates are March 19 through July 15 for scheduling data and April 16 through July 15 for actual use data.

# Accessing DISCUS

DISCUS is accessed via the Lotus Notes Client. If you need instructions for accessing DISCUS and creating a bookmark, see the "Set-up Instructions for DISCUS" section of the binder.

When you open DISCUS, the main menu appears. Below is a snapshot of the main menu page.
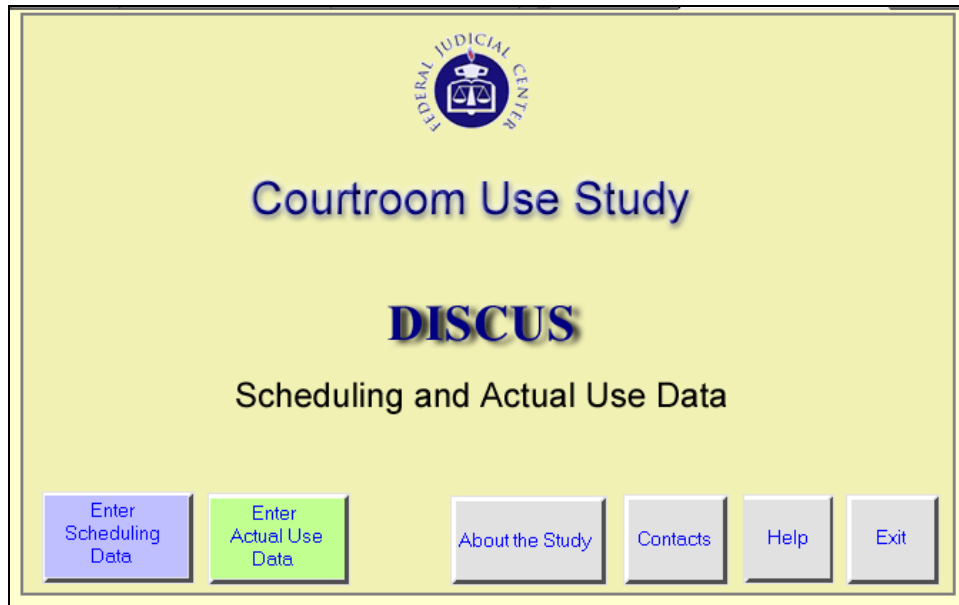


There are six buttons on the DISCUS main menu. Click on a button to select the desired function.

- **Enter Scheduling Data:** Use this button to record all scheduling data.
- **Enter Actual Use Data:** Use this button to record all actual use data.
- **About the Study:** Use this button to access a brief description of the Courtroom Use Study.
- **Contacts:** Use this button to find contact information for your FJC liaison.
- **Help:** Use this button to find how-to information about each screen in DISCUS.
- **Exit:** Use this button to close DISCUS.

All persons in your district with DISCUS privileges have access to every record in DISCUS. They can record, edit, cancel, and/or delete records for all judges and locations.

# DISCUS: Scheduling

## About the Scheduling Module

The "Scheduling Module" is the place in DISCUS where you must record all events scheduled for your judge's courtroom and certain other events scheduled for other places. Scheduling data is information about the expected use and availability of courtrooms and other spaces that serve in place of a courtroom. You will record scheduling data in DISCUS when you learn that an activity or event will take place *in the future*. You will also record scheduling data in DISCUS when you know *in advance* that a courtroom will *not be available* for use.

## Creating Scheduling Records in DISCUS

The "Scheduling Module" includes a Calendar View and a Detail View. The Calendar View is the place to start entering scheduling information, since this is where you select the place and date where events will be held. You will then proceed to the Detail View, where more specific information about the event can be recorded. Each of the views is described below.

### The Scheduling Calendar View

Click on the "Enter Scheduling Data" button on the main menu. DISCUS will open to the Calendar View. The example below shows the day view for January 29, 2007 in the Jefferson City District Courthouse's District Courtroom 3$^{rd}$ Floor.

There are several features to note about the Calendar View:

1. The name of the module is found in the upper left corner of the screen—in this case, "Scheduling Data." Always check to be sure you are recording data in the correct module. In addition to the name, notice the color. The "Scheduling Module" is highlighted in blue (the "Actual Use Module" is highlighted in green).

2. A courtroom name appears on the left and also at the top of the screen. This is your default courtroom—that is, the one your court liaison identified as the room for which you would most often be entering data; most likely it is your judge's assigned courtroom. When you first open the "Scheduling Module" DISCUS will present the calendar view for your default courtroom.

3. On the left below the monthly calendar are listed the courtrooms and other locations where events might take place in your district. Notice that the rooms in your version of DISCUS have been customized for your district.

4. The Calendar View defaults to today's date.

5. At the top is a button for "New Event," which you will click when you want to record an event that is being scheduled for your judge's calendar. You can also create a new event and automatically schedule a one-hour block of time for that event by double-clicking on the appropriate hour in the daily Calendar View. Also at the top is the "Go to" button, which is used to open, in a separate window, the "Actual Use Module," the "Help Module," or the "Main Menu."
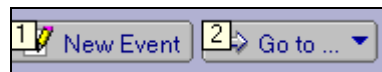


6. The "Formatting" button on the upper right allows you to choose the "Summarize" option, which gives you a detailed view of events you've scheduled.
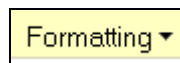


7. The "Other Courtroom Views" link on the lower left allows you to see the data in different ways—for example, by date, room, judge, or scheduler.



8. The "Unresolved Events" option under "Other Courtroom Views" is a very important feature (see illustration at 7, above). It allows you to see any events you've scheduled for dates in the past but that you haven't yet "resolved"—i.e., events that haven't either been cancelled, rescheduled, or linked to an actual use event. This is a helpful

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view for checking whether you've entered an actual use event for every event you've scheduled.

9. The "Cancelled Events" view allows you to see all the scheduled events that have been cancelled (see illustration at 7). If you need to restore a previously cancelled event, you can pull up the event under this view and click "Restore."

## The Scheduling Detail View

This is the view where you will record specific information about an event you're scheduling for a future date. Most fields are required, and you can't save a record until you have completed all fields. Since several of the items in the Detail View are defaults, you will have to record only a few pieces of information in this view:

1. Event category and event type
2. Case identification
3. Event description
4. Whether the courtroom was the judge's assigned courtroom and, if not, why not
5. Whether the time needed to schedule the event was longer than 45 minutes

The principle features to note in the Detail View are:

1. The "General Information" section of this view identifies the site, room, date, and time for the event being scheduled. These items are carried over from the Calendar View, but you can change them by using the pull-down menu(s) in this section.

2. The "Event Information" section asks you to identify the "Event Category" and "Event Type" for the event you're scheduling.



3. If you've chosen "Case Proceeding Conducted by a Judge" or "Other Case-Related Activity" as the event category, DISCUS requires you to record the case(s) you're scheduling. If you're scheduling a number of short events of a similar type—e.g., initial appearances or status conferences—you may enter them as a single event labeled, for example, "multiple criminal cases." If one of these events lasts longer than 30 minutes, however, we ask that the case number and time taken for that case be recorded in the case list [e.g., 06-cv-123 (45 mins)].

A separate record must be created for each trial (i.e., the "multiple cases" function isn't appropriate), and each trial record must include the specific case name and/or number. You may also record the case name or number manually (the field is a free text field).



4. DISCUS contains a nearly complete list of cases pending in your district (the list will be updated every Monday during the study period). To identify the case(s) you're scheduling, you can click on the "Select Cases" button, which opens a window like the one on the next page. To sort by docket number or by plaintiff or defendant, simply click on the arrows to the right of those words. Putting a check next to an entry selects it; entering multiple checks selects multiple cases. Click "OK" to populate the cases in the Detail View. To search for a particular case, simply start typing the docket number; a text box will appear for you to enter the search string. You can also search by plaintiff or defendant; to do so, click on the arrows after "Plaintiff" or "Defendant" to select that column, then start typing your search string.

5. The "Event Description" section asks for a brief description of the event, such as "sentencing" or "jury trial." It is a free text field.



6. The name of the judge is carried over as a default. You may change it by using the pull-down menu or entering the correct name manually.



7. DISCUS assumes the event is being held in your judge's assigned courtroom, but if it isn't, DISCUS asks that you record that fact and then answer the question about why the event was scheduled in a different location. This question is found in the section "Room Selection Information," which is shown on the next page.

8. Recognizing that on occasion it may take an extraordinary amount of time to schedule and reschedule an event, we ask that you report this information in the "Scheduling Arrangements Information" section. If it takes you more than 45 minutes of actual time (your time making phone calls, writing emails, etc, but not the days or hours that may go by while you wait for a return call), then you should answer yes to this question and answer the questions that follow.



9. Once you've finished recording all the data, click the "Save" button at the top of the screen. Note that DISCUS will not permit you to close a record until you've completed all the required fields, which are marked with an asterisk. DISCUS will display the message below if you recorded the event successfully.
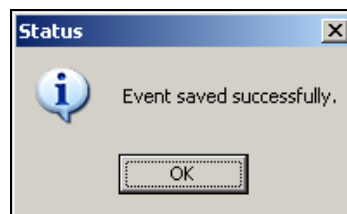


## Scheduling a Recurring Event

Many events, such as arraignments, motions days, trials, etc. occur repeatedly on a regular schedule. DISCUS permits you to schedule these types of proceedings through a single entry using the "Repeat" function.

1. Schedule the event as you would any other event using the instructions on the proceeding pages.

2. Before saving your entry, click on the "Repeat" button at the top of the screen. It's located near the "Save" button.
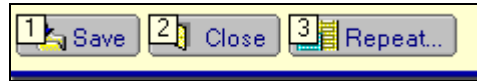


3. A pop-up window appears, asking for information on how the event repeats. Create the repeating event using the appropriate pull down menus and click "OK." Remember that the Repeat function defaults to the present day of the week—that is, if it's Tuesday, the Repeat function will default Tuesday. Make sure to click on the appropriate day of the week for the event you're scheduling.



4. Click the "Save" button. The word "Repeat" will appear next to the event description to let you know it's a recurring event.

## Modifying, Canceling, and Restoring Scheduled Events

For any number of reasons, you may need to modify or cancel events you've already scheduled. You might also want to restore a previously cancelled event. Making such changes in DISCUS is a very straightforward process.

Remember that there is no need to modify a scheduled event if you wish to modify only the case list. The final case list can be recorded when the event is entered into the "Actual Use Module."

### Modifying a Scheduled Event

1. Find the scheduled event you want to modify and double click on it to open it.

2. Click on the "Edit or Cancel Event" button at the top of the screen.



3. Make the change to the "General Information" section and any other sections as necessary.

4. Scroll to the bottom of the screen.

5. Complete the "Change/Cancel Information" section. First, choose "Change/Reschedule." Then record the date when the court learned about the change. Select all the reasons the event is being modified.



6. Click "Save." If your event is one in a series of events, you have the option to make the change for all events. In that case, choose "All Instances" (rather than "Just This Instance") and click "OK."

7. After saving an event, DISCUS returns you to the Scheduling Calendar View for the date and location you were viewing before editing the event. If you changed either the date or the location while editing the event in the Scheduling Detail View, you will have to navigate to that new date and/or location to see the saved event. If you're rescheduling all instances of a multi-day event and your modification will span a weekend or holiday, check to make sure that the individual days of the event have been shifted as you intended. If any events have been shifted into weekends or holidays, you will need to manually reschedule them.

## Canceling a Scheduled Event

1. Find the scheduled event you want to cancel and double click to open it.

2. Click on the "Edit or Cancel Event" button at the top of the screen.



3. Scroll to the bottom of the screen.

4. Complete the "Change/Cancel Information" section. First, choose "Cancel." Then record the date when the court learned about the cancellation. Select all the reasons for the cancellation.



5. Click "Save." The event has been cancelled.


## Restoring a Cancelled Scheduling Event

1. In the Calendar View, click on "Other Courtroom Views" and then "Cancelled Events."

2. Choose the site and date on which the entry was originally scheduled (prior to cancellation). Find the correct event and highlight it by clicking on it.

| Room | Date | | | Judge / User | Event Category | Event Type |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ▼ Kansas City District Courthouse | | | | | | |
| ▼ Courtroom 8A | | | | | | |
| ▼ 01/11/2007 | | | | | | |
| | 02:00 AM | - 03:00 AM | | Gary Fenner | Case Proceeding Conducted by a Judge | Hearing – Evidentiary |
| ▶ 01/10/2007 | | | | | | |

3. Click the "Restore" button at the top of the screen.
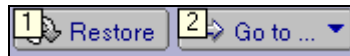
4. Once the event opens, change any information necessary.

5. Scroll to the bottom of the screen.

6. Complete the "Restore Information" section. Record the date when the court learned about the need to restore the event. Then, select all the reasons the event is being restored.

7. Click "Save."

## Scheduling Record History

For all scheduling events, you can see a record history, including who recorded the original entry and when, and all modifications to the original entry. In the Detail View of an event record, scroll to the bottom of the screen and click on "Record History" to see this complete record history. An example is shown on the next page.

**Record History**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Created By: | Lori Murphy/Education/FJC | Created Date: | 01/11/2007 |
| Last Modified By: | Lori Murphy/Education/FJC | Last Modified Date: | 01/18/2007 |

Activity Log:

1> 1/11/2007 [Updated By Lori Murphy / known date: 1/2/2007]
- Judge Needed to Reschedule
- Attorney / Party Needed to Reschedule

2> 1/11/2007 [Updated By Lori Murphy / known date: 1/2/2007]
- Case is Settled

3> 1/18/2007 [Updated By Lori Murphy / known date: 1/1/2007]
- Event Cancelled In Error

## Resolving Scheduled Events

If there is a scheduling record in DISCUS, there must be some resolution of the sched-
uled event—i.e., it must be resolved through an actual use record, or it must be cancelled
or rescheduled. We've already demonstrated how to cancel or reschedule a previously
scheduled event. Those are both done in the "Scheduling Module." To resolve an event
that actually happened, create an event in the "Actual Use Module." See the next section
for specific instructions for linking the actual use record to the scheduling record.

Below is the "Unresolved Events" view in "Other Courtroom Views," which allows you
to see which scheduled events have not been resolved. This view is refreshed each night.
If you've resolved the scheduled event (e.g., rescheduled it, canceled it, or created an ac-
tual use event and linked it) the event will disappear from the "Unresolved Events" view
the following day.



| Room | Date | | | Event Information |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ▼ **Jefferson City District Courthouse** | | | | |
| ▼ District Courtroom 3rd Floor | | | | |
| ▼ 01/17/2007 | | | | |
| | 09:00 AM | - 05:00 PM | | Gary Fenner [8 hours (Repeat)] — Jury Trial<br>- Docket # / Case: 3:01-cv-02272 — Cobbs v. McGraff<br>- Event Category: Case Proceeding Conducted by a Judge<br>- Event Type: Trial - Jury |
| ▼ 01/16/2007 | | | | |
| | 09:00 AM | - 05:00 PM | | Gary Fenner [8 hours (Repeat)] — Jury Trial<br>- Docket # / Case: 3:01-cv-02272 — Cobbs v. McGraff<br>- Event Category: Case Proceeding Conducted by a Judge<br>- Event Type: Trial - Jury |
| ▼ 01/15/2007 | | | | |
| | 09:00 AM | - 05:00 PM | | Gary Fenner [8 hours (Repeat)] — Jury Trial<br>- Docket # / Case: 3:01-cv-02272 — Cobbs v. McGraff<br>- Event Category: Case Proceeding Conducted by a Judge<br>- Event Type: Trial - Jury |

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## About the Actual Use Module

The "Actual Use Module" is the place in DISCUS where you must record all events that take place in courtrooms and certain other events scheduled for places outside the courtroom. What events should you record that occur outside the courtroom? Two types. The first is case-related proceedings conducted by a judge with at least one party present. This would include settlement conferences, status conferences, and any other event involving a case and the parties, no matter where these events occur (e.g., in chambers, at the judge's home, in a state courthouse). The second is any ceremony—e.g., a naturalization ceremony, a swearing in of new attorneys—conducted in some place other than the courtroom.

Actual use data records things that have already happened. You will record actual use data in DISCUS when you learn that an activity or event *has taken place*.

## Creating Actual Use Records in DISCUS

The "Actual Use Module" includes a Calendar View and a Detail View. The Calendar View is the place to start entering actual use information, since this is where you select the place and date where events were held. You will then proceed to the Detail View, where more specific information about the event can be recorded. Each of the views is described on the following pages.

### The Actual Use Calendar View

To access the "Actual Use Module," go to the DISCUS main menu and click on the "Enter Actual Use Data" button. Or, if you already have the "Scheduling Module" open, use the "Go to" button and click on "Actual Use Data." The module will open to the Calendar View. The example on the next page shows the day view for January 29, 2007 in the Jefferson City District Courthouse's District Courtroom 3$^{rd}$ Floor.
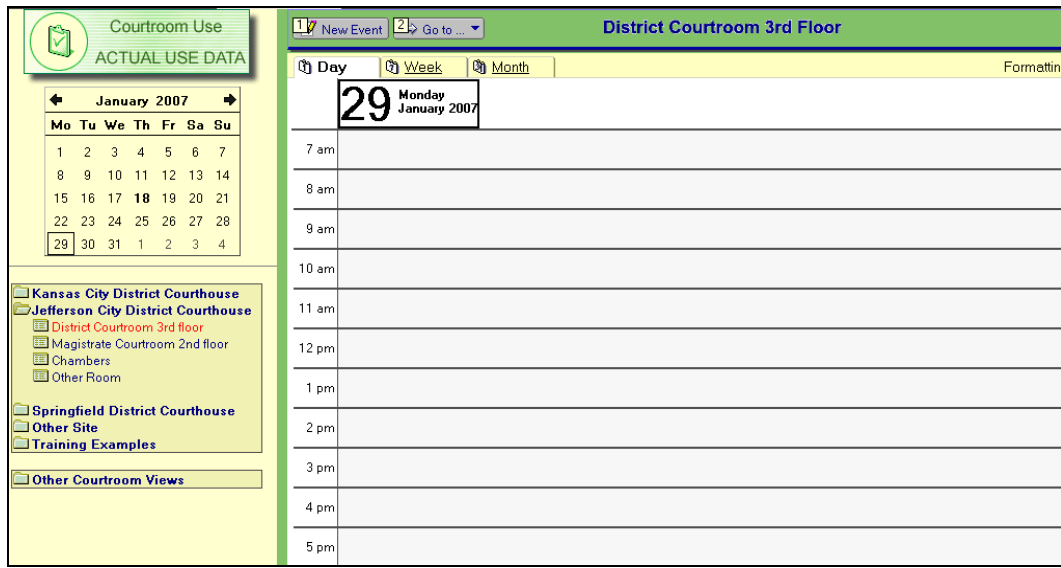
There are several features to note about the Calendar View:

1.  The name of the module is found in the upper left corner of the screen—in this case, "Actual Use Data." Always check to be sure you are recording data in the correct module. In addition to the name, notice the color. The "Actual Use Module" is highlighted in green (the "Scheduling Module" is highlighted in blue).

2.  A courtroom name appears on the left and also at the top of the screen. This is your default courtroom—that is, the one your court liaison identified as the room for which you would most often be entering data; most likely it is your judge's assigned courtroom. When you first open the "Actual Use Module" DISCUS will present the calendar view for your default courtroom.

3.  On the left below the monthly calendar are listed the courtrooms and other locations where events might take place in your district. Notice that the rooms in your version of DISCUS have been customized for your district.

4.  The Calendar View defaults to today's date.

5.  At the top is a button for "New Event," which you will click when you want to record an event that has happened.

6.  Also at the top is the "Go to" button, which is used to open, in a separate window, the "Scheduling Module," the "Help Module," or the "Main Menu."
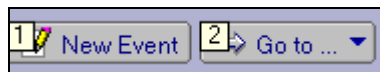
7. The "Formatting" button on the upper right allows you to choose the "Summarize" option, which gives you a detailed view of events you've recorded.



8. The "Other Courtroom Views" link on the lower left allows you to see the data in different ways—for example, by date, room, judge, scheduler, or link status.
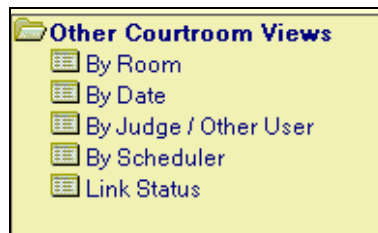


## The Actual Use Detail View

This is the view where you record information on an event *that has been held* and also where, if the event was previously recorded, you can edit or delete it. Most fields are required, and you can't save a record until you have completed all fields.

The principle features to note in the Detail View are:

1. The "General Information" section of this view identifies the site, room, and date the event occurred. These items are carried over from the Calendar View, but you can change them by using the pull-down menu(s) in this section. The only information you have to record in this section are the start and end times, which you can enter either manually or by clicking on the respective clocks.

2. If there is at least one previously scheduled event (in the "Scheduling Module") on the date and in the courtroom you've selected, a "Copy Scheduled Event Information" button will appear in the "General Information" section. Click on this button to see a list of events scheduled for that date and location. Highlight the event you want (i.e., the one you want to create an actual use record for) by clicking on it and then click "OK." This will pull all scheduling data over from the "Scheduling Module." Note that you can create an actual use record without a corresponding scheduling event, since not all events that occur are scheduled in advance (e.g., an emergency hearing, a sudden settlement conference).



3. If you've successfully copied the scheduling information, the word "Linked" will appear in the upper right-hand corner of the Detail View.
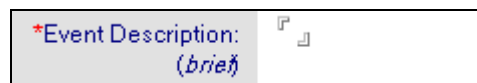


4. On the Detail View screen, the "Event Information" section asks you to identify the "Event Category" and "Event Type" for the event you're scheduling. If you copied the information from a scheduled event, this will already be filled in.



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5. The "Select Cases" button can be used to search for and select case(s); it works exactly as it does in the "Scheduling Module." Case information is required for all events categorized as "Case Proceeding Conducted by a Judge" or "Other Case-Related Activity." If a number of short events of a similar type occurred, you may enter them as a single event labeled, for example, "multiple criminal cases." If one of these events lasts longer than 30 minutes, however, we ask that the case number and time taken for that case be recorded in the case list [e.g., 07-cv-971 (35 mins)].

   The time for each trial must be recorded separately and must include the specific case name and/or number. You may also record the case name and/or number manually (the field is a free text field).
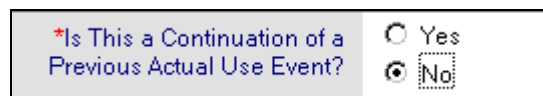
6. The "Event Description" section asks for a brief description of the event, such as "sentencing" or "jury trial." It is a free text field.



7. The name of the judge is carried over as a default. You may change it by using the pull-down menu or entering the correct name manually.



8. The "Event Information" section asks, "Is This a Continuation of a Previous Actual Use Event?" Choose "Yes" only if this actual use event is connected to another actual use event. And when asked to identify which event it's connected to, enter the immediately preceding date on which the event was held. For example, if it's the end of the day on Wednesday and you're recording time for a multi-day trial that began Monday morning, you'll answer yes (because the event is a continuation of a previous actual use event), and, when asked for the date of the previous event, you'll give Tuesday's date, which is the immediately preceding date.

9. The "Event Information" section also asks, "Did the Proceeding Start Within 15 Minutes of the Scheduled Time?" Answer the question accurately, and answer any subsequent questions asked. For an event that begins after an adjournment (e.g., afternoon session of a trial), answer the question based on the time the judge said the proceeding should resume.



10. DISCUS assumes the event is being held in your judge's assigned courtroom, but if it isn't, DISCUS asks that you record that fact and then answer the question about why the event was scheduled in a different location. This question is found in the section "Room Selection Information."



11. The last section in the Detail View is "Related Activity Information." This section of DISCUS, which is shown on the next page, is intended to provide you a timesaving way to capture the time spent by others in the courtroom either before or after the main event (i.e., before or after the case proceeding, ceremony, etc.) that was held in the courtroom. This section is also the place to record short adjournments (20-59 minutes long). Always record the main event first, and then include the related activities. DISCUS will automatically create separate events on the calendar for each activity.

Remember that for purposes of the study, "court staff" includes courtroom deputies, judicial assistants, court security offices, court reporters, interpreters, IT staff, and so on. "Attorneys" includes not only the lawyers but also their clients and witnesses. You do not need to record the time for each individual who is in the courtroom. We want you to capture only the time of the earliest arrival and the final departure for each category of persons in the room.

12. Related activities cannot be added to an actual event record once that record has been saved. If you have to enter time for related activities after you've already saved the record for the main event, you'll have to create a new record for each related activity—i.e., for court staff, for attorneys, for others, and for adjournments. In the new record, you'll use the "Event Category" titled "Set-Up, Take-Down, or Short Adjournment." Because this takes more time, you want to try, if at all possible, to report related activities in the main event record rather than separately.

There is another instance in which you'll have to use the "Event Category" titled "Set-Up, Take-Down, or Short Adjournment." That is when you prepare for an event or wrap things up afterward on a day other than the day of the event. You may, for example, set up the special proceedings courtroom the day before a naturalization ceremony. Or you may remove materials from the courtroom the day after holding an education program for high school students. In such instances, you would report your time in a separate record, using "Set-Up, Take-Down, or Short Adjournment" to describe your time.

13. Once you've finished recording all the data, click the "Save" button at the top of the screen. Note that DISCUS will not permit you to close a record until you've completed all the required fields, which are marked with an asterisk. DISCUS will display the message below if your recorded the event successfully.
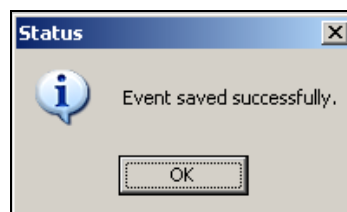
## Modifying or Deleting Actual Use Events

For any number of reasons, you may need to modify or delete actual use events. Making such changes in DISCUS is a very straightforward process.

### Modifying an Actual Use Event

1. Find the actual use event you want to modify and double click on it to open it.

2. Click on the "Edit or Delete Event" button at the top of the screen.



3. Make the change to the "General Information" section and any other sections as necessary.

4. Scroll to the bottom of the screen.

5. Complete the "Change/Delete Information" section. When modifying a record, choose "Change." Then record the date when the court learned about the change. Select all the reasons the event is being modified.



6. Click "Save."

7.  After saving an event, DISCUS returns you to the Actual Use Calendar View for the date and location you were viewing before editing the event. If you changed either the date or the location while editing the event in the Actual Use Detail View, you will have to navigate to that new date and/or location to see the saved event.

8.  Any actual use "Related Activity" event (e.g., time staff or attorneys spend setting up or taking down) will not automatically be changed when you modify a main event. You will have to manually edit each of the related activities separately. While DISCUS allows you to save time initially by entering related events along with the main event, it prevents you from automatically editing or deleting all related events simultaneously.

## Deleting an Actual Use Event

1.  Find the scheduled event you want to delete and double click to open it.

2.  Click on the "Edit or Delete Event" button at the top of the screen.



3.  Scroll to the bottom of the screen.

4.  Complete the "Change/Delete Information" section. When deleting a record, choose "Delete." Then record the date when the court learned about the need to delete the record. Select all the reasons for the deletion.



5.  Click "Save." The event has been deleted. The "Actual Use Module" does not have a "Restore" option. Once an event has been deleted, it cannot be restored. If you've deleted the event in error, simply create a new scheduling record for the event. Don't forget to link it to the scheduling record (if there is one).

## Actual Use Record History

For all actual use events, you can see a record history, including who recorded the original entry and when, as well as all modifications to the original entry. In the Detail View, scroll to the bottom of the screen and click on "Record History" to see this complete record history.



## Linking Actual Use Events to Scheduled Events

The "Link Status" option under "Other Courtroom Views" is used to see whether actual use records have been linked to corresponding scheduling records. If there is a scheduling record in DISCUS, there must be some resolution of the scheduled event—i.e., it must be resolved through an actual use record, or it must be cancelled or rescheduled. If an actual use record is linked to a scheduling record, a handshake icon will appear, as shown below. (See page 19 for a discussion of linking actual use and scheduling records.)

If an event in this view does not have a handshake, but you know it should be linked to a previously scheduled event, you can link it after the fact. In the "Link Status" view, double click on the actual use event you want to link. On the "Detail View" screen, click the "Edit or Delete" button. Click the button in the "General Information Section" that says "Link to Scheduled Event Only."



Select the event you want to link to and click "OK." The word "Linked" will appear in red at the top right of the screen.

Scroll to the bottom of the screen. In the "Change/Delete Information" section, complete the information and select "Created Link to Scheduled Event" as the reason for the change.



When you go back to the "Link Status" view, you will immediately see the handshake for the event you just linked.