



# ON-PREMISE VS. CLOUD: 5 KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR STATE COURTS MANAGING DIGITAL EVIDENCE

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As courts across the country face growing volumes of digital evidence—body cam footage, cell phone records, surveillance video, and more—how that evidence is stored and managed has become a critical decision. For state courts modernizing their systems, the choice between on-premise and cloud-based storage is more than just a technology decision—it’s a strategic one that impacts security, accessibility, costs, and long-term sustainability.

## 5 KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Here are five key considerations state courts should weigh when evaluating on-premise versus cloud storage for digital evidence:

### 1. Security and Compliance

**On-Premise:** Courts often feel more in control with on-premise storage, especially when handling sensitive or high-profile cases. Security protocols can be customized to internal IT policies, and access can be strictly limited to on-site personnel.

**Cloud:** Modern cloud providers invest heavily in advanced cybersecurity measures, often exceeding the capabilities of internal court IT departments. Leading providers also comply with CJIS, NIST, and other government standards, making cloud a viable option when compliance is properly validated.

**Consideration:** Ensure any cloud provider meets court security requirements and offers clear documentation on encryption, access controls, and audit trails.

### 2. Accessibility and Collaboration

**On-Premise:** Local storage can limit access to evidence outside of the courthouse network, making it harder for attorneys, clerks, and judges to access files remotely or share them securely.

**Cloud:** Cloud-based systems enable secure access from any authorized device, supporting virtual courtrooms, remote collaboration, and faster case prep—even across jurisdictions.

**Consideration:** Courts handling increasing numbers of remote hearings may benefit from the flexibility cloud offers in sharing and accessing files without compromising security.

### 3. Scalability and Storage Limits

On-Premise: Physical storage systems must be sized for expected growth, which can lead to expensive overprovisioning or surprise capacity issues when digital evidence suddenly spikes.

Cloud: Cloud solutions scale on demand, making it easy to accommodate surges in data without the need for new infrastructure.

Consideration: If your court regularly receives large digital files like video evidence or anticipates growing case volume, cloud storage can help avoid costly infrastructure upgrades.

### 4. Cost and Maintenance

On-Premise: Upfront hardware investments and ongoing maintenance can be significant. Budget planning must account for equipment lifecycles, system upgrades, and IT staffing.

Cloud: Subscription-based pricing shifts costs from capital expenses (CapEx) to operating expenses (OpEx). It also reduces the burden on internal IT teams, as the provider manages upgrades and backups.

Consideration: Courts with constrained budgets or limited IT resources may find cloud-based models more sustainable over time.

### 5. Disaster Recovery and Continuity

On-Premise: Backups are only as reliable as the systems and policies in place. In the event of a natural disaster or cyberattack, evidence could be at risk.

Cloud: Cloud storage typically includes geographically redundant backups, ensuring that digital evidence is preserved and accessible even during local outages or disasters.

Consideration: Disaster recovery capabilities should be a major factor in the decision, especially in regions prone to natural disasters or cyber incidents.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

The shift to digital evidence management is well underway. Whether your court is modernizing for the first time or looking to scale an existing system, the decision between on-premise and cloud storage comes down to priorities: control vs. flexibility, fixed investment vs. operational efficiency, and local access vs. anywhere collaboration.

Some courts may opt for hybrid approaches—storing highly sensitive data on-premise while using the cloud for less sensitive evidence or as a backup layer. The right choice will depend on your jurisdiction's needs, resources, and long-term strategy.

What's clear is this: The volume and complexity of digital evidence will only continue to grow. Future-ready courts are those making thoughtful, informed decisions today about how to store, manage, and secure it.

