



Attending Court Hearings via Video

Guiding Principle: To every extent possible, video hearings are to be conducted in the same manner as if the proceedings are taking place in a Courtroom or hearing room.

Protocol for Participants

- This is a court hearing. Dress as if you were attending court in person.
- All rules that apply in the physical courtroom also apply during a remote video hearing.
- Send whatever exhibits you intend to introduce into evidence to both the Court and to opposing counsel **well in advance of the hearing**, and that includes documents, photos and videos. Uploading exhibits to the E-Portal will include these documents in the court file. However, filing a document does not make it admissible evidence. The judge/judicial officer conducting the hearing will consider the legal admissibility of an exhibit when it is offered into evidence. If you have any questions about how to submit evidence, contact the judge's office to determine how he or she wants the documents to be sent to the Court.
- Test your device ten minutes before the hearing starts to ensure that you can access Zoom.
- Use Zoom's "rename" function to ensure that it displays your correct name (not the name of your device), and introduce yourself by name when your case is called.
- It is suggested that you dress in a solid color; if a tie is worn, use a solid tie rather than one with a pattern.
- Be mindful of what is behind you; choose a solid neutral wall if possible. It is not appropriate to appear at a court hearing from a bedroom, back porch, poolside, etc. (note: the Zoom video platform has a virtual background feature that may be used, but you should choose something professional).
- Find a quiet place to participate in the hearing.
- Turn off or silence cell phones or other devices with notification sounds.
- Please limit distractions during your hearing. Do not complete other tasks during the hearing. Put all pets in another room. Children should be supervised elsewhere by another responsible adult during the hearing. Just like in an actual courtroom, you must pay attention so you do not miss something important that is said or required of you.
- Do not consume food during the hearing.
- When speaking, remember to look directly at the webcam, not at the screen.
- Position the camera at your eye level or slightly above eye level.
- Check the lighting. Light from a window behind you might blind the camera, making you look dark. Light above you in the center of a room might also cast shadows. Ideally, position a lamp, or sit facing a window, where light is directly on your face. Also, be aware that your monitor casts light that can make you look blue.
- Speak slowly and clearly, in the event the host is recording the proceeding.
- Speak only when requested to do so. Always speak one at a time and pause prior to speaking in case there is any audio/video lag.

- Mute your microphone when you are not required to speak.
- Never share your personal meeting ID with a nonparticipant.
- The host (the Court) may be recording the proceeding, if the proceeding is one in which the court is required to create a record (see the Sixth Judicial Circuit’s Court Reporting Plan, 2018-042 <http://www.jud6.org/LegalCommunity/LegalPractice/AOSAndRules/aos/aos2018/2018-042.pdf>.) No other participant or observer is authorized to record the proceeding. Use of any recording of this proceeding by anyone other than the Court to prepare official transcripts is prohibited. Any recording other than what is made by the Court is not the official record and may not be used in future trial or appellate proceedings.

Protocol for Observers

- A member of the public or other non-participant may observe court hearings if the proceeding is open to the public.
- Any such observer must follow all of the above applicable guidelines for participants; in particular, **no participant or observer is authorized to record the proceeding. Use of any recording of this proceeding by anyone other than the Court to prepare official transcripts is prohibited. Any recording other than what is made by the Court is not the official record and may not be used in future trial or appellate proceedings.**
- If a member of the public or other non-participant wishes to observe a video hearing, he/she must contact the judges’ office and request an invitation to participate in the hearing. If the proceeding is open to the public, the hearing invitation will be provided.
- An observer will not be allowed to *participate* in the video hearing, just like they would not be permitted to participate in a proceeding being conducted at a physical location.
- Observers must keep their microphone on mute *at all times* since they are not permitted to participate in the hearing.
- Any observer who is disruptive or distracting will be removed from the video hearing.
- Use Zoom’s “rename” function to ensure that it displays your correct name (not the name of your device), and **add Public or Media in front of your name.**
- Turn off your video, so only your name is being displayed.