

Zoom Guidelines

Judge Brady O'Callaghan

- Please check the standing order for mandatory rules regarding video conferences.
- Test your equipment a few minutes before every conference. A usually reliable microphone on a computer or tablet can glitch at the most inopportune time, and identifying a problem in advance can give you time to use a telephone line for the audio portion.
- Make sure your camera is resting on a stable platform. Jiggly camera images are distracting and even disturbing to some people.
- Be aware of distracting noises in the background, such as other people in the office (or home), electronics, or other sounds. If appropriate, keep your microphone muted unless you are actively speaking in the hearing to keep the cumulative background noise to a minimum.
- Be aware of lighting. Try to have good illumination on yourself and any witnesses.
- Avoid multitasking. While this may be appropriate during a lecture or large group meeting, for status conferences or hearings, it is inappropriate and distracting.
- Be aware that different conferences have different requirements. For status conferences with the court, being closer to the camera is perfectly fine, since the point is communication, not testimony.
- If a client or witness is giving testimony, please have the camera positioned so that they are visible from the waist up, especially if they are not co-located with counsel. This avoids the accusation that a witness is holding anything to assist him or her in his or her testimony.
- Attire can also vary. For informal status conferences with the court, the court does not expect courtroom attire. However, tank tops and ball caps should be avoided as they would not be appropriate to wear into chambers at the courthouse. For actual video hearings, court attire should be worn. All proceedings will be both video and audio recorded, and taking the time to dress for court can help to remind everyone that while being done by video, the legal consequences for the parties affected are every bit as real.

- Like attire, be mindful of the background. If you are an attorney appearing from your office, be aware of any privileged materials that may be visible on screen. Parties may not use a virtual background for actual proceedings unless the court has given leave to do so. If a virtual background must be used for a status conference, make sure that it is appropriate to the relationship among the parties and the matters being discussed. The court doesn't mind discussing picking a new date while you look like you are on a boat, but would prefer not to discuss serious abuse allegations while looking at a comical background. Use common sense.