

Hon. Audrie Lawton-Evans
County Civil Court at Law No.1



Hon. LaShawn A. Williams
County Civil Court at Law No.3

Hon. Jim F. Kovach
County Civil Court at Law No.2

Hon. Manpreet Monica Singh
County Civil Court at Law No. 4

HARRIS COUNTY CIVIL COURTS AT LAW
AMENDED INSTRUCTIONS FOR VIDEO HEARINGS & TRIALS

● **Required Equipment**

- a computer with a camera and microphone which has access to internet service (highly recommended); or
- a smartphone with a camera; or
- a telephone.

● **Zoom Software (Free)**

- All Harris County Civil Courts at Law use Zoom video conferencing. Please download the Zoom Client Application well in advance of the hearing:
 - The free app for smartphones is available at the Apple App Store for iPhones and Google Play for Androids.
 - The free software for your computer is available at Zoom.us. Click on the “Resources” tab at the top right and select “Download Zoom Client.”
 - Please review how to use Zoom and its various features by accessing the following link: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>

● **Setting Your Video Hearing**

- **REQUESTING A DATE:** Motions will be set on each Court’s Submission Docket. A party may request a setting for a preferential oral hearing by filing a request for oral hearing with a proposed order, leaving blank a line for the assigned date to be inserted. Such a request should include: (i) an explanation of the need for a preferential setting and whether the matter is essential or non-essential; (ii) the number of expected attendees participating in the hearing; and (iii) the amount of time necessary for the hearing. Please contact the Court with any questions.
 - **NOTE TO ATTORNEYS:** Attorneys are responsible for sending the link and information to their clients and witnesses if they will need to join the hearing from a location separate from the attorney. Attorneys are also responsible for sending the link and information to *pro se* litigants and confirming that they have instructions on how to access Zoom.
- On the day of the hearing, click the “**Join with Zoom**” link located on the Civil Court Streams and Meeting Rooms page at <http://www.ccl.hctx.net/CourtStream.html> at least 5-10 minutes before your hearing to test your system, and to ensure that everything is in working order.
- Parties and witnesses giving testimony must appear by video.
- Please ensure you are in a private safe location free from outside noise, interference and distractions.

- **What to Expect Once Signed in to Zoom for Your Hearing**

- **RECORDING STRICTLY PROHIBITED:** The recording of any proceeding by anyone other than the Court Reporter is strictly prohibited by law. The Court Reporter's record is the only official record of the proceedings. Please refer to the Harris County Civil Courts at Law Order Regarding Recording Video Hearings and Trials.
- **Courtroom Decorum:** We will continue to observe appropriate courtroom decorum, demeanor, and dress codes. Remote hearings are official court hearings and open to the public via the Civil Court Streams and Meeting Rooms. For additional information, please visit <http://www.ccl.hctx.net/CourtStream.html>.
- **Once Signed In:** You may be placed in a "Waiting Room" or "Breakout Room" until your case is called. PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE the room unless instructed by the Court.
- While in those rooms you may send chat messages to the Trial Coordinator or Clerk. When your case is called, the Coordinator or Clerk will open your video conference with the Judge. If it is necessary during the proceedings for the parties to seek a recess, break or confer, the parties may be placed in a "Breakout" room in Zoom upon request.
- **Breakout Room (Joining/Leaving):**
 - These rooms are used by the Court so that parties may confer prior to the hearing. DO NOT leave the breakout room unless instructed by the Court.
 - Joining
 - When prompted by the Court click "join"; or
 - Computer: On the bottom of the screen, select "breakout room," then "join breakout room"; or
 - Smartphone/Tablet: Top left of the screen, select "breakout room," then "join breakout room."
 - Telephone: When prompted by the audio press # (pound)
 - Leaving
 - Computer: On the bottom of the screen, select "leave," then "leave breakout room"; or
 - Smartphone/Tablet: Top right of the screen, select "leave," then "return to main session."
 - Telephone: Hang-up the phone and then redial into the Hearing by dialing (346)-248-7799 then enter the 10 digit Meeting ID.
- **Live Stream:** You will not be able to observe the proceedings while you are in the Zoom "Waiting" or "Breakout" Rooms; however, you will be able to monitor the live proceedings via the Court's streaming link: <http://www.ccl.hctx.net/CourtStream.html>
- **EXHIBIT AND WITNESS LISTS MUST BE TIMELY E-FILED PRIOR TO THE HEARING/TRIAL. All exhibits must be exchanged with all parties prior to the setting.** If a *pro se* party does not have the ability to e-file, the *pro se* party must email the exhibit and witness lists with exhibits to the court

reporter and other party at least 24 hours prior to the hearing. Please redact any sensitive material.

- **Request for Record:** A request for the record must be emailed to the Court Reporter at least 24 hours prior to the hearing.
- **Sharing Documents During Zoom:** Once signed in, documents can be shared in two way:
 - **With participants** via the “Chat” tab in Zoom. Use the “To:” drop-down selection to choose to whom to send your document and click the “File” button to upload your document. Zoom can upload documents directly from your computer, Dropbox, Google Drive, and One Drive. Additional set up may be required. See <https://zoom.us/integrations> for more.
 - **Screen Share** – The Courts require that those who have evidence they wish to share with the court be familiar with using the share screen feature via Zoom.
 - Computers/Tablets/Smartphones: See “Share Screen” bottom center of the screen. Ensure you close any private matters before sharing the screen.
 - Please refer to Zoom Help Center tutorials, search share screen, and then watch short “how to” videos: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>
- **Interpreters:** Interpreters may appear by audio only through Zoom. They should have computer access to view documents that need translating. Arrangements for interpreters shall be made at least 24 hours prior to the hearing. Notice of the same should be given to the other parties and the Court via e-filing, or email if the party does not have access to e-filing.
- **For Contested Hearings and Trials**
 - Any documents offered into evidence should be shared with all parties 5 days prior to the hearing. To the extent possible, parties should agree on what is admissible prior to the hearing.
 - The Court may require a pre-trial hearing. The Court may also require the parties to confer prior to the hearing.
 - Parties may invoke the Rule to exclude non-party witnesses. The Judge can move remote witnesses to a virtual meeting room where they will be unable to view the proceedings. However, because each proceeding is broadcasted on the Court’s live streaming site, the witnesses will be instructed not to view the proceedings subject to contempt of court.
 - Discovery – Depositions may be taken remotely, pursuant to Texas Supreme Court Emergency Orders.
 - Mediation – Many mediators are equipped with Zoom or other remote video services. Parties should continue to actively mediate their cases during this emergency period.
 - Zoom offers main “rooms” for opening statements and private meeting rooms for private discussions.

For any questions regarding these instructions, please contact the appropriate court trial coordinator or clerk.