

## Quick Reference Guide for Remote Court Proceedings

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The Connecticut Judicial Branch now has hearings and other proceedings by video-conference (using Microsoft Teams), known as “remote court proceedings,” in addition to in-person proceedings. This quick reference guide will help answer questions about how to participate in a remote court proceeding. This guide should be used together with the [Connecticut Guide to Remote Hearings for Attorneys and Self Represented Parties](#).

Remote court proceedings are just like any other court proceeding; the only difference is that in a remote court proceeding, some or all of the participants may not be in the same physical space. Some may participate from a traditional courtroom while others may participate on a computer by video-conference or, if the judge allows it, by telephone. Though the proceeding may look different, it is important to remember that a remote court proceeding *is* a court proceeding.

### I have a Remote Court Proceeding – What do I do?

In order to participate in a remote court proceeding by video-conference, you will need access to the internet and a device with a camera and a microphone. To participate by telephone you will need a phone.



**If you do not have a phone or access to the internet and a device to video-conference, let the court know as soon as possible.**

The court may be able to help you find a way to participate or your hearing may be postponed until everyone can participate. All courts have space with technology to allow you to participate in your remote court proceeding. These spaces, known as “Remote Rooms,” are available to you. Contact the court to arrange to use one.

### Getting Set Up to Take Part in a Remote Court Proceeding

#### Step 1: Get the Link to Log into the Remote Court Proceeding

Remote Court Events will be conducted via *Microsoft Teams*. The Court will send you notice of the remote court proceeding and will ask for your email address and contact information. You must provide your email address and contact information to the court at the address listed on the notice. A few days before your remote court proceeding, court staff will email you instructions with an access code *or* a Teams meeting link to join the proceeding at a scheduled date and time. When you get the email, it is very important that you read it carefully.

#### Step 2: Check Your Technology

To take part in a remote court proceeding by video conference you will need:

- A computer, tablet, or smart phone. A list of hardware requirements for Teams can be viewed by visiting the [Microsoft Teams website](#).
- Secure and dependable internet service. If possible, use a web browser other than Internet Explorer due to possible compatibility issues, and

- Microsoft Teams installed on your device or the Teams Web App. The Teams App for computers can be downloaded free of charge. You can download the Teams App from the [Judicial Branch Remote Justice](#) webpage. The Teams App for iOS (App Store) and Android (Play Store) smartphone devices and tablets is also available free of charge. Please note that features may be limited when using Teams on a smartphone or tablet.

You should test Teams before your hearing or proceeding using the Quick Card developed by the Information Technology Division of the Connecticut Judicial Branch: “[Teams: Make a Test Call](#)”



**Before getting started, view the following short video:** [Join a Teams meeting](#).

For more videos, Quick Cards, Guides, and further help see the [Remote Justice](#) page developed by the Information Technology Division of the Connecticut Judicial Branch.

### Step 3: Get Ready for Your Remote Court Proceeding

1. **Prepare and practice.** Plan ahead. In the days before the remote court proceeding, test your device and Teams to make sure you are familiar with all features and that your set up is working properly. Be ready to join the remote hearing or proceeding 10-15 minutes before the scheduled start time so that you can troubleshoot any technical problems you may have.
2. **Check all connections.** Is the Wi-Fi working and at its strongest signal? Is the network cable securely inserted into the modem? Verify/test/adjust the microphone and video camera settings on the computer and/or device as needed.
3. **Charge all batteries.** If you are using a laptop, make sure it is plugged in or fully charged. Have a cell phone or mobile device charged as a backup and keep a charger nearby as video conference sessions can quickly drain batteries.
4. **Microphone.** A headset or headphones with a built-in microphone provide the best sound quality for a remote court proceeding. If you don't have either, try using the microphone on your smartphone or tablet as it may provide better sound quality than the microphone on your computer or laptop. Speak clearly.
5. **Learn how to Mute and Unmute.** Turn on the microphone when it is your turn to speak; mute your microphone when you are not speaking. This will help reduce echoing and audio feedback. Always check the computer/device screen when you begin speaking to ensure that your microphone is on.
6. **Keyboard and Apps.** Keep your hands off the keyboard unless necessary and only keep necessary windows and programs open.
7. **Security.** Make sure you have a reliable antivirus program installed that provides virus, phishing, and web protection, and always keep operating systems and browsers updated.

- 8. Support.** Identify someone who can help you with technical problems before or during the remote proceeding. This may be the technical support contact person within your organization or a friend or family member. If you are using a computer, create a backup plan in case it malfunctions, such as using a smart phone or tablet. While court staff will schedule the remote court proceeding, it is unlikely that staff will be available at the courthouse to help you with technical issues before or during the proceeding.

### Can I Access My Case Electronically?

**Yes, you may be able to access your case electronically.** Online access to cases is available on the Judicial Branch website through [Case Look-up](#) for appellate, civil, family, criminal, housing, and small claims cases. Of note:

- Disclosable documents in civil cases are available online.
- Limited case information regarding family cases is available online; however, disclosable documents in family cases are only publicly available from computers located in Judicial Branch courthouses.
- Basic information about criminal cases may be found online, e.g., charges and continuance dates in disclosable pending cases. However, documents in criminal cases are not posted online. Documents that are disclosable in a criminal case file may be obtained through the clerk's office in the courthouse where the case is pending.
- Electronically submitted exhibits that are not under seal or subject to sealing are viewable online to all attorneys and self-represented parties with electronic access to the case file.

You may view disclosable documents at any clerk's office or access them through computers at any of the Judicial Branch's Court Service Centers.

Additionally, you may access your case electronically by [enrolling in E-Services](#). Self-represented parties may choose to enroll in E-Services at any time. E-Services allows you to: (1) file documents in your case online; (2) look at documents in your case online; or (3) mark short calendar matters in your case online.

### What if I Need to Change the Date of my Remote Court Proceeding or Just Need General Help with Forms?



Visit your nearest [Court Service Center](#) or [Public Information Desk](#), or email your question to [Court.ServiceCenter@jud.ct.gov](mailto:Court.ServiceCenter@jud.ct.gov).

### **Tips for Remote Court Proceedings**

- **Courtroom Rules and Behavior.** Even though the hearing or proceeding is not in a physical courtroom, it is still a court proceeding. The same formal rules followed in a physical courtroom are also followed in a remote proceeding. Speak to the judge, court staff, attorneys, and other parties as if you were in a physical courtroom. Note that it is unnecessary to stand for the judge when he or she enters the remote proceeding or when you are addressing the judge. Do not smoke or vape, eat or chew gum, or answer calls or texts during the proceeding. Do not speak to others in the room with you or walk away from the camera. If you need a break, ask the judge for a recess.

- **Proper Dress.** Dress as you would if you were appearing in court in person. Solid-colored clothing is recommended because it is easier to see on the screen.
- **Be Prepared.** Read everything you have about your proceeding before the remote event, including anything you get directly from the court. Remember, this is *your* proceeding. Others in the room with you should not speak during the remote proceeding unless the court asks them to participate. If you are representing yourself, you should use your own words to tell the judge or court about your case. If you are represented by an attorney, you should talk to your attorney before the remote court proceeding.
- **Interpreters, ADA Requests, and Other Needs.** If you have a special need, such as the need for an interpreter, contact the court right away after learning of your remote court proceeding to give them time to assist you.
- **Choose the Right Location.** Don't choose an empty room with mostly hard surfaces like a kitchen. Instead, choose a small room with soft furnishings, like a sofa or carpet, which will help prevent echo. To avoid moving around on the video, sit in a chair that doesn't swivel and do not stand or pace during the proceeding. Try to pick a room with a window, and, if possible, sit facing the window. Try not to sit with a window or other light source behind you and avoid using a light over your head, because it will make it harder to see your face. Make sure that what's behind you in the video isn't cluttered and distracting. Sitting in front of a mostly blank wall is best. Position your camera by setting the laptop, tablet, or device on a few books or a box so that others may see you at eye level. Refrain from tilting your head up or down. Instead, look straight into the camera. People should see your head and shoulders.
- **Limit Distractions.** Participate in the remote court proceeding from a quiet, secure location. If others must be present in the same room, tell them that they must be quiet during the proceeding. Tell them this is an official court proceeding. This is especially important for children. As the adult, it is up to you to pre-plan a safe place for your children to be while you are focused on your court matter. If possible, you should arrange for children to be supervised in another room during the proceeding. If you have pets, put them in a safe place such as outside or in another room.
- **Limit Phone Usage.** Witnesses are not permitted to use or access their phones while participating in remote proceedings unless told to do so by the judge. All participants should have their cell phones silenced. Turn off or silence alerts for things such as email, text messages, and news/weather during the proceeding. Guides on the use of electronic devices in the courtroom have been created for the [Superior](#) and [Appellate](#) courts and apply to the remote courtroom as well.
- **One Speaker at a Time.** Do not interrupt other people when they are speaking or attempt to speak over them. When it's your turn to speak, pause for a moment before you begin to make sure everyone is finished speaking. Mute your audio when you are not actively speaking to the court to reduce background noise. This also ensures the court record is accurate.

- **Do Not Record.** Participants are not allowed to record proceedings, including making audio recordings or screen captures.
- **On The Record.** Like hearings in the courtroom, remote court proceedings on the record are open to the public. Members of the public may view and listen to a remote court proceeding by entering a physical courtroom just as they would an in-person hearing. When participating in a remote court proceeding, documents with sensitive information and other personal information should be moved out of view of the camera.
- **Documents and Evidence.** If there are documents or evidence you wish to use in your remote court proceeding you must provide copies to all participants, including the court, in advance of the court event. In all existing and newly initiated paperless civil and family matters, documents intended to be introduced as exhibits must be submitted electronically on the E-Services site. This is mandatory for attorneys and law firms who are not exempt from E-Services requirements, and optional for self-represented parties enrolled in E-Services. For more information on evidence or exhibits, refer to pages 14-16 of the [Connecticut Guide to Remote Hearings for Attorneys and Self-Represented Parties](#).