



JUDICIAL CHAMBERS
COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
FIFTY-NINTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA
ELK COUNTY CAMERON COUNTY

ZOOM VIRTUAL PROCEEDING PROTOCOL

YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO APPEAR BEFORE THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF THE 59th JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA, ELK AND CAMERON COUNTIES, VIA THE ZOOM MEETING APP. You must follow these instructions and appear for your hearing/argument/conference. Failure to appear may result in your claims being denied, or opposing claims granted against you, up to and including a default judgment.

First, you should download the Zoom app on your computer, tablet, and/or smart phone. To do this, you can visit www.zoom.us. The Court will provide the Meeting ID and Password for your proceeding. When you attempt to join the meeting, it will ask you whether to open in the browser or open/install the Zoom app. Instruct it to open in the Zoom app and allow it to install the program. You may, in the alternative, use the call-in information with a voice call, but while you will be permitted to participate, you will not be permitted to testify under oath unless you appear in camera on Zoom.

You must use your real name, first and last, when signing in.

As this is an official court proceeding, you should be in a location that offers privacy and is free of background noise and distractions.

Witnesses who are not on camera will not be permitted to testify.

Dress Code

Parties and Witnesses are expected to be dressed as if this was an in-person proceeding. It is incumbent upon you to ensure that your witnesses are properly dressed. You and your witnesses should be fully clothed and in appropriate attire (for example, pajamas are not appropriate for a video conference hearing).

Instructions

1. You will join the virtual courtroom at the scheduled time by clicking the link or entering the Meeting ID and Password provided in the invitation or court order.
2. When you join a virtual setting, you will appear in a virtual waiting room with all other parties, attorneys and witnesses. There may be several cases set on the docket at that time. When your case is called, the court will bring you into the virtual courtroom.
3. Because the Zoom app works on all modern smart phones, tablets and computers, each attorney is expected to appear by video, rather than merely by voice.
4. When you enter the virtual courtroom, your video will automatically be on and your audio muted, until the proceeding begins.
5. Hearings will be on the record through the use of the official court reporter. As with regular court proceedings, arguments and conferences will not be on the record.
6. Witnesses will be called as in any case, and the Court will bring them in one at a time from the waiting room. Remember, only individuals on the video will be permitted to testify unless they are in the physical presence of a notary public.

7. You may “slip notes” to you lawyer, using the private chat feature. To do so, hit the “CHAT” button, and at the bottom of the chat window, pull-down the recipient arrow and select your lawyer’s name. However, you are not to communicate with your lawyer or anyone else while you are testifying. You are also prohibited from using the chat feature to communicate with witnesses. Witnesses are only permitted in the virtual courtroom while they are testifying. You are not to hold notes or paperwork in your hands while testifying, just as though you were on the witness stand.
8. You may, upon request, confer in private with your attorney. You should “slip a note” via chat feature to you lawyer and request a moment to confer. If your request is granted by the Court, you will be moved into a private video room to confer for a few moments.
9. Exhibits and plea papers must be submitted to the official court reporter. If your hearing is in front of President Judge McMahon or a Senior Judge, you will submit your exhibits to srs.reporting@yahoo.com. If your hearing is in front of Rebekka L. Dean, Esq., as support hearing officer, you will submit your exhibits to cselk@pacses.com. Exhibits need to be submitted forty-eight (48) hours prior to your proceeding. Exhibits not sent by at least 3:30 P.M. the day before your proceeding may not be accepted. Additionally, the court reporter will not be sharing the exhibits with anyone until they are admitted during the proceeding, at which time, the court reporter will give the exhibits to the judge.
10. All exhibits should be named in this format: the county initials “EC” (Elk) “CC” (Cameron) followed by the docket number, followed by the initial for your party (P for Plaintiff, D for Defendant, C for Commonwealth) and finally followed by the number of the exhibit. For example: EC 2020-123 P1. Evidence not anticipated or submitted prior to the hearing may be submitted during the hearing through the chat/file feature in Zoom. However, just as in person proceedings, the Court will not be looking at text messages or emails that are on a party’s phone. If a party is anticipating needing a text message from their phone, it should be prepared as an exhibit, just as it would be in an in person proceeding.

Exhibits and witnesses are not permissible for custody conciliation conferences. Only counsel and the parties may participate and the conference officer does not take testimony from witnesses or accept evidence at a custody conciliation conference.

Additional instructions will be given to you by the Court during the hearing.

The Court understands this process seems complicated; however, the Court believes you will find that all of our comfort levels will grow quickly with each proceeding we handle virtually. These instructions are subject to change as we grow in our knowledge of this video conference platform. The Court appreciates your flexibility and willingness to adapt to this new reality. Should you have any questions or need clarification on these instructions, do not hesitate to reach out to Court Administration for additional help.

Hon. Shawn T. McMahon, President Judge