

DO'S AND DON'TS OF ZOOM AND IN-PERSON HEARINGS

With Courts gradually starting to resume hearings through the use of Zoom rooms, we wanted to help flatten the learning curve and help you get more comfortable and prepared for virtual court hearings. We expect the courts will use Zoom and other similar technologies to conduct virtual hearings for the foreseeable future.

Here are some tips and tricks to help you prepare before, during and after your hearings.

Before the Hearing

- Set up your computer or device somewhere quiet and out of the way if possible.
- Have your phone handy. If you need to communicate with your CAM or attorney during the hearing, text is the best way to do so. If they need to communicate with you before or during the hearing, this is likely how they will do so.

Signing in to the Hearing

- Log into the Zoom waiting room several minutes before the hearing is scheduled to start. Your CAM or attorney will advise you if there is a significant delay in start times.
- Set your Zoom ID to something that readily identifies you as the GAL. First name, last name is required. No nicknames, initials, etc. No artificial backgrounds behind you .
- Be present at your device at the scheduled start time. The judges are asking who participants are and removing people quickly from the room if they do not respond. If the judge does not recognize your name and you are not there when he asks you to identify yourself, it will cause delays when the attorney has to try and have the court allow you back into the hearing.
- On docket days, Wednesdays in WPB courthouse, most divisions require you have your microphone muted and camera off until your case has been called. Once the case is called, you can unmute, turn camera on, and get ready to introduce yourself at that time.

During the Hearing

- Please mute your audio upon entering the hearing and remain on mute unless you are testifying. When you are done testifying, remember to mute your audio again. If you are using a computer to connect to Zoom, holding your space bar will temporarily open your audio. Releasing it will mute your line again.
- Please conduct yourselves as if you were in the Courtroom. In other words, please be mindful that you are being seen by the Judge and everyone else participating in the hearing. Maintain your composure and a neutral expression at all times, even if you disagree with what is being said. Remember, as in the actual court room, these hearings are being recorded.
- Monitor your phone for text messages from your team. This is proper communication.

So, now that we've covered a few of the Do's of Zoom hearings, let's cover a few of the Zoom Don'ts!

- Don't use nicknames or your phone number as your Zoom username. Zoom saves the username last used between uses. Many of you use Zoom calls for other reasons. Please make sure your Zoom username is appropriate for the hearing.
- Don't unmute yourself unless you are called to speak by the Judge or another attorney.
- Don't leave your camera on and unattended. If for some reason you must step away please stop transmitting your camera.
- Don't send messages through the Chat feature. Even if you send the message privately to another user, it will appear in the transcript of the hearing.