

Fresno County Superior Court- Probate Division

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) ¹ for Remote Video Hearings

1. Can I still go to court if the courthouse is closed due to COVID-19?

The Probate court is hearing cases by ZOOM. The Chief Justice of California has authorized courts to do this in her orders on March 23, 2020 and March 30, 2020.

In person appearances are allowed at the Courthouse; however the Court strongly encourages you to participate remotely.

- Appearing by Zoom **is free to all parties** and you can appear by video or by phone.
- Judges and staff will appear remotely; other parties will appear remotely in the courtroom, even if you appear in person.

All parties entitled to notice must also receive a copy of the calendar setting notice with the Zoom information so they have the option to attend the hearing remotely.

If you need additional information, contact the Probate Zoom Coordinator at (559) 457-1760 or email at probatezoomcoordinator@fresno.courts.ca.gov

2. How do I know if my hearing will be conducted using Zoom?

If you have a court date, you will receive a Notice of Calendar setting by mail with the Zoom information. Do not try to start your own Zoom session, wait for the Court to send you an invite. The Court has access to professional versions of Zoom that let them control the proceeding, almost as if it were really in a courthouse.

If you need additional information, contact the Probate Zoom coordinator at (559) 457-1760) or email at probatezoomcoordinator@fresno.courts.ca.gov

3. How do I show the Judge documents during the hearing?

Documents should always be filed at least 2 court days before the hearing. If you do not file your documents before the hearing, your matter may be continued and/or the information may not be considered.

4. Recording of the hearing is prohibited. What does that mean?

Any recording of court proceedings held by video or teleconference, including “screen-shots” or other audio /visual recording of a hearing, is absolutely prohibited. Violation of these rules may result in sanctions, including removal of court-issued media credentials, restricted entry to future hearings, denial of entry to future hearings, or any other sanctions deemed necessary by the Court.

5. Is the virtual courtroom more casual than a regular courtroom?

Consider the video conference to be a courtroom. Dress neatly. Do not wear pajamas, printed t-shirts, tank tops, or hats. Dress like you are going to a job interview. If at all possible, a caregiver should help keep your child occupied during the session.

6. What do I do if I don't have internet access?

You can appear using Zoom by video or phone. If you do not have access to the internet, you may appear by calling the phone number included on the Notice of Calendar Setting. The number provided is a toll-free.

For some additional resources available during the COVID-19 crisis. Please see: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/availableinternetplans.asp>

7. What are some other Zoom tips?

You should practice using Zoom before court if possible. You may also benefit from watching court hearings beforehand. A link to court sessions that are live streamed for viewing can be found on the home page of the Court's website, www.fresno.courts.ca.gov.

Other suggestions include:

- Look directly at the camera when speaking, not at the screen.
- Position the camera at your eye level or slightly above eye level.
- Be mindful of what the camera can show behind you.
- Make sure there is good lighting in the space you are using.
- Speak when prompted by the judge or Court staff and pause prior to speaking in case there is a slight audio/video delay.
- Remember to mute your device when you are not speaking in order to avoid any potential background noise.
- Test your Zoom connection and setup with a test meeting.

1 Modified from the self-help information provided at: <https://texaslawhelp.org/article/virtual-court#toc-1>

How do I use ZOOM?²

Preparing to participate in a Zoom Video Conference

- If you will be a participant in a Zoom video conference hearing with the Court, proper preparation will ensure all involved will have a good experience using the system.
- If you wish to observe the Zoom video conference with the Court, please go to the Fresno Superior Court's YouTube page where you can watch live proceedings as they occur. You will have a similar experience to sitting in the courtroom audience.
- Please note that some proceedings may provide phone-only connectivity by Zoom or other means, and that hearings may be limited to a total of participants.
- For security and enforcement of court standards, the court may disable some Zoom interactions (such as chat, screen share, whiteboard, Q&A, raise hand, react, etc.).
- The Court will not provide technical support for Zoom participants or attendees. Please contact the [Zoom Help Center](#), your local IT support, or other online guidance for assistance.

Zoom Account and Software

1. **Participants:** If you do not have a Zoom account, go to <https://zoom.us> to create an account. A paid Zoom account is not necessary for any interaction with the court.
2. Log into <https://zoom.us/profile> and set your name, phone and email. Including a photo will help identify you when connecting. .
3. Install the latest Zoom Client for Meetings at <https://zoom.us/download>. Although Zoom can be used in a browser only, it is very limited. The full Zoom client is required for best functionality and experience with the system.

4. Always keep your software up to date! The Zoom Client automatically updates itself upon launching the software, but you can also [update it manually](#).

Settings

Zoom has a lot of settings, and updates to their system may change options. Below are a few settings recommended by the Court to improve your video conference:

- General: Ask me to confirm when I leave a meeting: ON (Helps prevent unintended departures)
- Video: Enable HD: OFF (Helps prevent poor video performance, and usually looks just as good as HD)
- Video: Always display participant names on their video: ON
- Video: Always show video preview dialog when joining a video meeting: ON (Final check before your video displays to others)

Learning

It is likely, that the court will only use the audio and video functionality of Zoom. Other functions such as, text chat, screen sharing, etc., will likely be disabled for your session. You only need to learn the basics of observing or participating in a Zoom Webinar by audio or video. Consult the following sources to learn how to select the correct audio and video source, how to mute/unmute your audio, and how to Start/Stop your video:

1. Video: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/sections/200521865-Video>
2. Audio: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/sections/200319096-Audio>
3. Learn how to easy mute/unmute with Push to talk:
<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360000510003-Push-to-Talk>

4. Hot Keys and Keyboard Shortcuts to start/stop video, mute, etc.:
<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/205683899-Hot-Keys-and-Keyboard-Shortcuts-for-Zoom>

Recommendations

1. Avoid using a mobile device if possible. Although tablets (iPads) and smartphones can be used, they are very limited. If your mobile phone is the only option, mute your phone, and mute all sounds from all other applications (email notifications, chat messaging, etc.).
2. Avoid using battery power only. Hearings may go longer than expected so plug your device into a good power source while in a Zoom session.
3. Unless you've confirmed the quality is sufficient, avoid using an open microphone and speakers, such as those that are built-into laptops or a webcams. Using a good quality headset (headphones with mic) will often help ensure you can be heard, and can hear others with maximum quality.
4. Avoid noisy and echoing locations. Use of a headset will improve audio quality when this is unavoidable.
5. Avoid distracting backgrounds, real or virtual.
6. Avoid poor camera positioning (if possible).
7. Avoid using WiFi if possible. A connection using a hard-wire Ethernet cable will always be faster and more reliable than WiFi.

Before EVERY Court Session using Zoom do the following:

1. Connect your device to a power source.
2. Make sure your internet connection is good:
<https://www.pcworld.com/article/2048594/how-to-test-your-home-internet-speed.html>
3. Test your video and audio.
4. Turn off all audio disruptions (phones, messaging alerts, email alerts, etc.)

5. Run a quick test to connect with another Zoom user, or use the Zoom test: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115002262083-Joining-a-test-meeting>

Additional information & resources

Fresno Superior Court notices related to COVID-19

<http://www.fresno.courts.ca.gov/>

²CREDIT: <https://www.cand.uscourts.gov.zoom>