

ORLEANS PARISH CITY COURTS REMOTE HEARINGS VIA VIDEOCONFERENCING

Orleans Parish First City Court and Second City Court are committed to ensuring access to court proceedings during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency.

Court proceedings can be convened remotely in order to eliminate the need for litigants, witnesses and attorneys to attend hearings in person. The court conducts most remote hearings via videoconferencing using [Zoom](#) and can accommodate phone conferencing.

Those individuals seeking a remote hearing or other accommodation because of a disability or COVID-19, should contact Mr. Ambrose Pratt at (504) 407-0401 before the scheduled hearing.

Litigants granted a remote hearing by videoconference (or other individuals granted remote access to a hearing) are reminded of the prohibition against photographing, recording, and rebroadcasting of court proceedings (including those held by telephone or videoconference).

Any recording of a court proceeding is a violation of the court's order and is punishable as contempt under the law.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS A REMOTE HEARING?

A remote court hearing means that you and the other participants may be participating from somewhere other than the courtroom (your home or other location of your choosing) using internet videoconferencing. The judge and court staff will be in the courtroom. You will be able to see and hear the judge and other participants.

First City Court and Second City Court are utilizing videoconferencing technology to minimize in-person contact during the COVID-19 pandemic and to give you the opportunity to participate more safely and conveniently at a location outside of the courthouse.

The Court is using [Zoom](#) to provide the videoconferencing service. It is free and can be accessed on a home computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone. You will need internet access or a data plan that allows you to view video.

If you do not have internet or the data to participate by video (or you do not have a webcam or camera on your device), the court can provide you with a toll-free phone number to participate by phone only. The court may also choose to call you if you provide your phone number in advance.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE A REMOTE HEARING?

You can schedule a remote hearing with the court, especially if you seek accommodations because of disability or a COVID-19 related issue. You should contact Mr. Ambrose Pratt at (504) 407-0401 as soon as you are served with court papers.

In some instances, the court may schedule a remote hearing on its own. In those cases, the court will notify all of the parties involved in the lawsuit and will make sure that the parties are able to participate remotely.

It is important to check your mail, email, and voicemail to see if the court has been trying to reach you to advise you on how to participate in the upcoming hearing.

If you need to contact the Judge's law clerk, the following is the contact information for each section of court:

Judge Monique G. Morial
Section 'A'
(504) 407-0340

Judge Veronica E. Henry
Section 'C'
(504) 407-0360

Judge Nadine Ramsey, Pro Tempore
Section 'B'
(504) 407-0350

Judge Ernestine Anderson-Trahan
Section 'D'
(504) 407-0431

The Judges' contact information can also be found on the court's [website](#).

Please remember that the court CANNOT give you legal advice.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE INTERNET OR PHONE ACCESS OR CANNOT ATTEND REMOTELY?

If you do not have a phone or access to the Internet, let the court know as soon as you can before your hearing. The court may be able to make other appropriate accommodations.

WHAT IF I NEED AN INTERPRETER OR OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THE REMOTE HEARING?

If you need an interpreter or other accommodation for your hearing, you must let the court know in advance of your hearing so arrangements can be made. Contact Mr. Ambrose Pratt immediately at (504) 407-0401.

You can also download a Request for Accommodations form from the court's website. If you are mailing in the request form, be mindful that eviction hearings are scheduled differently than other cases and your hearing date may require that

you also telephone Mr. Pratt immediately to advise him of your accommodations request.

See the link below to go directly to the court's Americans with Disabilities Act webpage.

[Request an Accommodation](#)

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT DURING THE REMOTE HEARING?

Make sure your computer or smartphone is charged and you have internet access. If possible, keep it plugged into the charger during the hearing. If you sense that you are running out of data or battery, let the court know immediately by sending a message using the Zoom "chat" feature.

General information on how to participate in your remote Zoom hearing can be found in the court's guide titled '[How to Join a Court Remote Hearing Using Zoom](#)'. The guide is located in the First and Second City Court section of the court's website at www.orleanscdc.com.

The court will provide you with more details (the meeting ID number and password) before your hearing date. The meeting ID and password are only for the people involved in the hearing.

You can also join a remote hearing by landline or cell phone, using audio only. You will use the phone number provided in the court's instructions. Once you dial the number, you will be asked for the meeting ID. Enter the meeting ID followed by the "#" key.

The internet link below will bring you to the Zoom 'Join a Meeting' page.

- [Join a Zoom Meeting](#)

BEFORE THE HEARING:

Plan to call in or log in early – at least 10 minutes before the scheduled start time. Remember that turning on your computer, navigating to a web page, and starting a video conference may take longer than you expect. Close all other programs on your computer. Use earbuds or headphones, if you can. This improves the sound quality. Try to securely prop up your laptop, tablet, smartphone or other device, so you can look directly at it without holding it by hand.

Make a list of what you want to tell or ask the judge, and keep your paperwork organized. Dress nicely as you would to appear in court (if appearing by video). Sit in front of a neutral background, such as a wall, in a well-lit area and find a quiet place where no one will disturb you during the hearing.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU JOIN THE HEARING:

- When you first join, you may be placed in a virtual “waiting room” before the court is ready to move you to the “hearing room” for your case. The court can send you a message while in the “waiting room,” but other participants will not be able to see or contact you.
- When you are moved to the “hearing room,” you will see the judge and other parties on your screen. The judge will make sure you can hear and be heard, and will explain the rules of the remote hearing.
- If at any time you cannot hear the court or other parties when they speak, or you are having trouble with the technology, immediately let the court know.
- Your hearing is live and will be recorded by the court reporter. Everyone will hear what you say. Place yourself on “mute” when not speaking, and listen carefully to the court’s instructions.
- When your hearing is complete, the court may place you in a “breakout room” for court staff to speak to you about your case before you leave the remote hearing.

DURING THE HEARING:

- Keep your microphone on “mute” when you are not speaking.
- Keep your telephone near you during the hearing in case of technical difficulties, but make sure it is on silent.
- Do not make any recording of the hearing. If you do, the court may sanction you.
- Say your name each time you speak.
- If you need to display an exhibit that you have sent to the court in advance, tell the court: “I would now like to show [exhibit].” The staff member hosting the hearing will show it so all meeting participants can see your exhibit.

SUBMITTING EXHIBITS TO THE COURT AND IF YOU NEED TO CALL WITNESSES:

If you need to show the judge an exhibit during the hearing, such as a photo or document, contact the court before the hearing and ask if there is an email address, fax number or other way that you can send the court your exhibit.

If needed, you can subpoena a witness to testify. You will need to complete a subpoena form at the First City Court Clerk's office and then have the Constable of First City Court serve the subpoena on the witness.

If you have a witness that does not need to be subpoenaed, let the court know so that it can send the witness information about how to join the hearing.

You should immediately contact the court if you need to subpoena a witness.