

Virtual Court Tips

Due to COVID-19 precautions, court hearings will continue to be on Zoom for the foreseeable future. Since attending court hearings online is a relatively new concept for all of us, here is a list of helpful tips that will aid you as we continue this digital journey together:

1. When you are logging onto a Zoom court hearing, please ensure your name appears properly upon entry and also add the identifier 'CASA' to help court staff determine who you are in the waiting room. (Instructions below.)
2. Time slots are guestimates and ***not appointments***. Advocates need to plan to join their Zoom court hearing early—about 20 minutes ahead. Similarly, Advocates should be prepared to wait if the judge is delayed - which can be well over an hour.
3. Be ready to go on record! (Announce your name and that you are representing CASA on the record when the attorneys are entering theirs at the outset of the hearing).
4. Speak up during the hearing if you are not called as judges sometimes forget to ask for CASA's input. Listen for the DAG, law guardian and parent's attorneys to participate (normally in that order) and then plan to be ready for the judge to ask you if you have anything to add – or politely interrupt at that point especially if the judge appears to be winding down the hearing.
5. Practice what you want to say if you intend to make a point about an issue that is important. Practicing will help ensure that you are clear and succinct.
6. Listen and be sure you are relevant. Do not rehash an issue if it has already been discussed and the judge has already moved on.
7. Re-read your court report just before the hearing so that it is fresh in your mind. (It is a good read if you are on hold for the hearing too!)
8. Take notes and enter them in Optima. We want to capture your time attending the hearing too!

Changing your name for court hearings:

- I. *Go to the Zoom invitation from the court. Do not click the link provided! Instead, first download the zoom app onto your laptop.*
- II. *Highlight the meeting ID with your cursor and copy it then open the Zoom app and click "join meeting"*
- III. *Now, paste the meeting ID that you copied earlier in the space that says, "enter meeting ID or personal link name" Under the meeting ID, there is a spot for your name. Make sure you write your name and CASA so they identify you as a CASA when you press "join"*

The hard work of our Advocates does not go unnoticed, especially during these challenging times. Our gratitude goes out to all of you.