

TO: Shawn D. Meyers, President Judge, Court of Common Pleas 39th Judicial District
FROM: Lindsay Gingrich Maclay, Support Master
DATE: May 5, 2020
RE: Support Hearings after May 11, 2020

Rhonda Oberholzer, DRS Secretary III, will continue to schedule Appeal Hearings. The Demand for Hearing form will now state as follows: “due to COVID restrictions and social distancing the Court is currently conducting Support Appeal Hearings via video conference unless there is a valid objection to this method. If you object to having your support appeal hearing via video conference, check whether you prefer to have the hearing ___ in person or ____ via telephone and provide the reason(s) for your objection:

I will then make the call on whether the hearing should be in-person, video conference, or telephonic based upon the reasons provided. When the Hearing Notice is sent out, we will provide the information for either the telephone number to be called for telephonic conferences (with PIN), or advise that an invitation for the video conference via Google Meet will be forthcoming to their email. Obviously, if a party does not have the technology to be able to participate in a video conference, an alternate methodology will be utilized, keeping in mind social distancing and cleaning, if it is an in-person conference. If there are multiple in-person Hearings scheduled on the same date, scheduling times will be adjusted to accommodate time to clean and disinfect in between hearings and/or a telephonic hearing may be scheduled in between 2 in-person hearings.

In order to facilitate the video and telephonic hearings all litigants and counsel shall complete the bottom portion of the Demand for Hearing form, including email addresses and telephone numbers for parties, counsel and proposed witnesses and they must submit their proposed Exhibits at least five (5) days in advance of the Hearing. The preferred method for doing so will be electronically to DRS at csfranklin@PACSES.com; however, they may also mail them in or leave them in the drop box to be scanned in prior to the Hearing. In this way, DRS staff are the only ones seeing the exhibits prior to the Hearing and DRS staff will email them to me a day or two prior to the hearing.

I plan to use Google Meet to conduct my hearings and DRS staff will be in charge of sending out the invitations to parties, counsel and witnesses. Proceedings will continue to be recorded whether they are held via telephone, via video conference, or in-person.

If in-person Hearings are occurring and there are multiple witnesses, only 1 witness will be allowed in the Hearing room at a time. The other witnesses will have to either wait in the waiting room, or, if there are many, may have to wait to be called at a different location. Directions will be provided on a case-by-case basis depending upon the number of anticipated witnesses. No additional persons will be permitted in the Annex that are not litigants, counsel or witnesses (besides others having official business before the court) ie: litigants cannot bring someone along for “moral support”. At this point, everyone appearing in-person will be required to wear masks.

