

HARRIS COUNTY CIVIL COURT AT LAW NO. 4 **INSTRUCTIONS FOR VIDEO HEARINGS & TRIALS**

Required Equipment & Software:

Harris County Civil Court at Law No. 4 is conducting hearings and non-jury trials using Zoom video conferencing. Anyone with a telephone, a smartphone with a camera, or a computer with a camera and microphone with internet will be able to utilize Zoom. Please download the Zoom Client App or download the free software for your computer at Zoom.us. Click on the "Resources" tab at the top right and select "Download Zoom Client."

Requesting Video Hearings:

Harris County Civil Court at Law No. 4 is conducting oral hearings via Zoom, upon request. If you want to request an oral Zoom hearing, we ask that you please contact the Court Clerks (713-274-1358) for an available date and time. Hearings are on Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., and 11:00 a.m. If you need a special hearing date and time, please contact the Court Clerks for availability on the Court's calendar, and the Clerks will do their best to accommodate your schedule.

Notices of Hearing must include the following when e-filed with the Court:

WEB ADDRESS: <https://hccocm.zoom.us/my/hccivil04>

This link is available on the Court's website: <http://www.ccl.hctx.net/civil/4/default.htm>

MEETING ID: 917 387 0209

DIAL INFORMATION TO ACCESS MEETING BY PHONE: 346-248-7799

Non-Jury Trials:

The Court will send a trial notice that contains the date and time of the proceeding and the below information necessary to access the proceeding. Please be aware that when a case is re-set you might first receive a standard trial reset notice from the Court. The Court will then send a second trial notice that contains the Zoom information for your case. This second notice will usually be sent at least 30 days prior to trial. Please read these notices in their entirety.

WEB ADDRESS: <https://hccocm.zoom.us/my/hccivil04>

This link is also available on the Court's website.

MEETING ID: 917 387 0209

DIAL INFORMATION TO ACCESS MEETING BY PHONE: 346-248-7799

If you have any questions, please contact the Trial Coordinator by email at: Rick.Wilson@ccl.hctx.net. On the date and time specified on your notice, please use the above information to access the proceeding. Please log in to the session at least 10 minutes prior to the setting time, and wait in the waiting room until you are checked in. Please have your docket number ready when you are checking in.

• NOTE: Attorneys are responsible for sending the above link and information to their clients and witnesses if they will need to join the hearing or trial from a location separate from the attorney. Attorneys are also responsible for sending the link and information to self-represented litigants and confirming that they have instructions on how to access Zoom.

Attorneys and witnesses giving testimony should appear by video (not simply by telephone). Please confirm you are in a private location free from outside noise and interference.

Preparing for Video Hearing/Trial—Exhibits:

All exhibits must be e-filed with the Harris County Clerk's office **at least five (5) days prior** to your setting. Please redact any sensitive material. Should such redacted information become necessary, you may be asked to email the information to the Trial Coordinator or the Court Reporter during the hearing.

In addition to e-filing all exhibits, please ensure that **all** parties have copies of any exhibits that will be presented to the Court.

If you are a self-represented party and are unable to e-file your exhibits, please contact the Harris County Clerk's Office about alternative filing options.

Your Video Hearing/Trial:

Remote hearings are official court hearings and open to the public via the Court's website. The recording of any proceeding by anyone other than the Court Reporter is strictly prohibited by law. The Court Reporter's record is the only official record of the proceedings.

Please continue to observe appropriate courtroom decorum, demeanor, and dress code. The Court will begin the process of check-in usually 5-10 minutes prior to the start of docket. Please log into Zoom or call in on time so that you can be checked in for the docket prior to its start. Parties who call in late or after a trial or hearing has begun may have to wait until the conclusion of the current hearing or trial to be check in by the Court. If you are running late or are having issues logging in for your setting, please contact the Trial Coordinator, Rick Wilson at: Rick.Wilson@ccl.hctx.net to alert the Court that you are going to be late. Please have your docket number available.

You will be placed in a "Waiting Room" until your case is called. In the "Waiting Room," you may send chat messages to the Trial Coordinator or Clerk. When your case is called, the Coordinator or Clerk will open your video conference with the Judge.

You will not be able to observe the proceedings while you are in the Zoom "Waiting Room;" however, you will be able to monitor the live proceedings on the Court's Website.

A request for the record must be stated prior to the start of the proceeding.

Interpreters may appear by Zoom. Please inform the Court that you have an interpreter prior to the start of the proceeding.

If it is necessary during the proceedings for the parties to seek a recess, break, or confer, the Court can place the parties in a private "Break Out" room in Zoom, upon request.

Preparing For & During Your Contested Hearings/Trials:

Many mediators are equipped with Zoom or other remote video services. Parties should continue to actively mediate their cases and conduct discovery during this pandemic.

As stated above, any digital documents offered into evidence must be shared with all parties prior to the hearing and must be e-filed with the Clerk's office **at least five (5) days prior** to your setting. To the extent possible, parties should agree on what is admissible prior to the hearing.

For bench trials, the Court may require a pre-trial hearing.

Parties may invoke the Rule to exclude non-party witnesses. The Judge can move remote witnesses to a virtual meeting room where they will be unable to view the proceedings. However, because each proceeding will be broadcast live on the Court's website, the witnesses will also be instructed not to view the proceedings subject to contempt of court.

For any questions regarding these instructions, please contact the Harris County Civil Courts at Law No. 4 Trial Coordinator, Rick Wilson at: Rick.Wilson@ccl.hctx.net.