

**CLERMONT COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT  
DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISION  
TELEPHONE OR ZOOM HEARING PROTOCOL**

**PREFACE:**

The Clermont County Domestic Relations Court has promulgated this Protocol to provide flexibility to counsel and parties, while mindful of the Court's resources and the Rules of Civil Procedure.

With respect to Pretrials, Status Conferences, and GAL Reports, the Court permits counsel and parties to participate by appearing in person in the courtroom, by Zoom, or by telephone.

Pursuant to Ohio Rule of Civil Procedure 1.1(E), audio presence is not permitted without video presence when taking sworn testimony.

**THE COURT WILL PRESUME THAT COUNSEL IS APPEARING IN PERSON UNLESS COUNSEL COMMUNICATES TO THE COURT AT LEAST TWO BUSINESS DAYS PRIOR TO THE SCHEDULED EVENT FOR A TELEPHONE APPEARANCE OR ZOOM CONFERENCE. UNLESS THE COURT DETERMINES IT TO BE AN EMERGENCY, NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE GIVEN FOR FAILURE TO REQUEST ATTENDANCE BY TELEPHONE OR BY ZOOM.**

**Telephone:**

If you wish to appear by **telephone**, the Court will initiate the phone call. You must email the following information to the email address below **at least two business days** prior to the scheduled event:

**domesticcourt@clermontcountyohio.gov**

- the phone number where he/she can be reached;
- the case name and number;
- the name of the judge/magistrate;
- the date/time of the pretrial on the email.

All parties, witnesses, and attorneys are to answer ANY call that appears 10 minutes before and after the event is scheduled to begin to account for the Court's schedule. Calls do not always appear correctly on Caller ID and may show up as SPAM, CALLER UNKNOWN or some other title. SCREENING CALLS OR NOT RECOGNIZING PHONE NUMBERS ARE NOT EXCUSES FOR FAILURE TO ANSWER.

**Zoom:**

Due to Ohio Rule of Civil Procedure 1.1(E), Zoom is this Court's preference for remote presence. If counsel or a self-represented party wishes to appear by **Zoom video conference** counsel/self-represented party must send an email the following information to the email address below **at least two business days** prior to the scheduled event:

**domesticcourt@clermontcountyohio.gov**

- the phone number and email address where the participant who wishes to appear by Zoom can be reached;
- the case name and case number; the name of the judge/magistrate;
- the date/time of the hearing.
- **A COPY OF THE EMAIL MUST BE SENT TO THE OPPOSING PARTY/COUNSEL.**

If counsel or a self-represented party, has requested to appear for a court hearing by Zoom, he/she will receive an email from court personnel which will include the Zoom link, meeting ID and passcode. ***It is the responsibility of the counsel/self-represented party whose witness is appearing by Zoom to provide the information above for his/her witness.***

Counsel are encouraged to have their client at their office to minimize technical issues.

### **How to prepare for your Zoom hearing:**

If you have never used the Zoom application before, please utilize the tutorials on the Zoom website, <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-Video-Tutorials>, to familiarize yourself with the Zoom application and all its features.

You must have a computer, laptop, smartphone, or tablet with video capability. Download the Zoom application to your computer, laptop, smartphone or tablet. Please test your microphone, audio and camera are functioning properly and familiarize yourself with how to adjust them prior to the Zoom hearing.

### **You will need reliable internet access, via Wi-Fi, cellular data, or Ethernet, at the time of your Zoom hearing.**

- Computer/Laptop: Using your internet browser, type in <https://Zoom.us/> and follow the prompts to download the Zoom application.
- Apple iPhone or iPad: Download the Zoom application for iOS from the App Store.
- Android Smartphone or Tablet: download the Zoom application for Android from Google Play.

Make sure you have the Court's phone number available in case you have technology problems.

### **How to join via Zoom:**

You will join the event by clicking on the link in the email sent by the court. The link will take you directly to the assigned Zoom private room. The private Zoom meeting rooms are NOT monitored unless an appearance by Zoom is specifically requested.

If you are unable to click on the link, you can join the Zoom private room by going to <https://Zoom.us/> or the downloaded application and select "Join a Meeting." You will need to enter the meeting ID number and passcode provided in the email. You will then click "Join."

Once you join, you will be placed in the virtual waiting room. The Court will admit you when all parties are ready. You may have to wait past the start time of your assigned Zoom hearing due to other cases on the Judge or magistrate's docket.

### **Appearance Protocol:**

**Zoom hearings are official court actions. Attorneys, self-represented parties, and witnesses must follow the protocols listed below when appearing by Zoom. The Judge or magistrate may end events if these protocols are not followed.**

All participants must conduct themselves as if they were physically present in the courtroom. This is an official court action being held virtually.

Participants should be focused only on the event. You should be in a quiet place, without interruptions, noise, or distractions. Participants should not be doing other tasks during the hearing. Avoid unnecessarily getting up and moving around.

Remember that participants can see what is behind you where the camera is pointed. Do not use offensive or distracting backgrounds when choosing a location in your home or office for your Zoom hearing.

People who are not involved must not be present, unless permitted by the Court. Other persons to be called as witnesses may not be present without leave of the Court. Make sure that other people, especially children, are not present. Those persons would not be present in a hearing room and this is an official court action.

Dress appropriately; this is an official court action.

Close out all other applications and create distance from other electronic devices to avoid interference with reception. If a witness's audio becomes too garbled, the witness may be asked to use a headset.

Mute your microphone if you are not speaking. This will eliminate background noise.

Do not use gestures or point to something because an audio record is being made.

**Exhibits:**

Exhibits need to be marked, organized and delivered to opposing counsel, self-represented parties, witnesses and the court at least one week in advance of the hearing. If an exhibit has multiple pages, please number the pages. Originals should be mailed to Clermont County Domestic Relations Court or dropped off if exhibits are too voluminous. The Court will not accept documents electronically.

Attorneys and self-represented parties will ensure that all witnesses who are appearing remotely receive a copy of each party's exhibits in advance of the hearing. If an electronic copy of exhibits is provided to a witness, the party who supplied the exhibits must ensure that the witness has the ability to view the exhibits during the Zoom hearing or ensure that the witness is able to print the electronic copies.

The party sending exhibits electronically bears the risk of transmission.

Attorneys and self-represented parties are encouraged to stipulate to the exhibits in advance.

If an attorney or self-represented party is planning to introduce an audio or video exhibit, the exhibit must be presented using the Share Screen feature. Attorneys and self-represented parties must be familiar with this feature in advance of the Zoom hearing. A physical copy of the exhibit in the form of a flash drive or CD/DVD must be provided to the Court.

**Witnesses:**

**All non-party witnesses may appear via Zoom unless otherwise ordered to appear in person.**

Attorneys and self-represented parties will be responsible for requesting a Zoom link as set forth in the pretrial order. An attorney or a self-represented party must provide the court with the name for any witness appearing by Zoom. If counsel or a self-represented party, has requested a witnesses to appear for a court hearing, he/she will received an email from court personnel which will include the Zoom link, meeting ID and passcode. ***It is the responsibility of the counsel/self-represented party whose witness is appearing by Zoom to notify the witnesses when they are expected to appear virtually for the hearing and forwarding the appropriate Zoom link.*** Witnesses will be placed in the virtual waiting room until they are called to testify.