

31st District Court Zoom Instructions

Most Court hearings will be conducted via Zoom unless you are ordered to appear in person by a Judge or court clerk.

What will I need to attend Court using Zoom?

You will need a desktop computer, laptop, or smartphone equipped with a camera and microphone and a stable internet connection. If you do not have access to those devices, see Call-In Options at the bottom of this document. The instructions for attending a remote hearing are as follows:

Step 1: Install Zoom for Free

For smartphones and tablets, install ZOOM from the Play Store or App Store. For your desktop computer, laptop or notebook device with webcam and microphone, please visit www.zoom.us/download and follow the instructions to download the app.

Step 2: Create an Account

Create a Zoom account by going to www.zoom.us, and click “Sign Up Free”, and follow the prompts. You will need to use your email address and create a password. You only need to do this one time; this is the account you will use each time you enter a Zoom virtual hearing.

Please test audio and video at least 24 hours before the conference. This can be done in the “Preferences” or “Settings” window of the Installed Zoom Program. You will also want to test the program to be sure that you have a strong Wi-Fi connection. If your signal strength is too weak this may impact your ability to participate in the virtual hearing. If you are unable to participate by video, see the section titled “Call-In Options”.

Step 3: Join the Zoom Call

Be sure to join the Zoom call 5 minutes before the start time.

1. To join, you will need to access the Online Courthouse. This information can be found on the Zoom invite that was emailed to you or, the Notice to Appear that was mailed to you.
2. After you enter the meeting, a screen should load showing your face, after you see this screen, click “join with video.”
3. Once these above steps have been completed, you will have joined the Zoom session and be placed into the Zoom Waiting Room. (When in the Waiting Room, you cannot hear or see the court proceedings.)
4. The name that you choose for yourself will be shown on the screen during the call. You must use your full name as it appears in your case as well as your case number so that you can be

identified. If you fail to do so you may not be admitted into the proceeding from the Waiting Room.

5. When the court is ready to hear your case, you will be allowed entry into the Zoom meeting from the Waiting Room.

6. A message box will then appear asking you to “**join with computer audio**,” or “**join with internet audio**.” Selecting this will allow you to hear the meeting and speak through your device.

Tips:

- Do not join the Zoom meeting while in a moving vehicle. Internet connectivity may affect your Zoom connection.
- You may join the Zoom court session if you join before the host is ready to start the session. Please do not leave the meeting; once the host begins the session, you will be placed into the Waiting Room.
- Join the Zoom Court Session 5 minutes before the scheduled time. If you arrive late, you will wait longer in the Waiting Room.
- When you are admitted from the Waiting Room, mute yourself by clicking on the microphone icon. If there is a red line through the microphone you are muted and cannot be heard by the people in the meeting. When it is your turn to speak, unmute yourself by clicking the microphone.
- If you have not previously clicked on the “Join by Video” button, you may click on “start video” after joining the meeting so that others can see you. If the “start video” icon on the bottom left corner has a red line through it, that means that no one else can see you.

Behave As You Would in a Courtroom

- You should be appropriately dressed if appearing by video for a virtual hearing.
- Be aware of your background (area behind you). Make sure it is appropriate; it will be seen by the Judge and other people attending the hearing. Make sure you are not sitting directly in front of or behind a window, the light or reflection can affect the video.
- Choose a quiet place to participate in the hearing. Cell phones should be muted, doors to rooms closed and disruptions minimized.
- Remain on mute until it is your time to speak. Do not speak over anyone and do not interrupt anyone. Use appropriate language as you would in a courtroom.
- If there is a court reporter or language interpreter present, be aware that he or she may interrupt from time to time to clarify who is speaking.
- If you do not follow the Court’s rules, you will be removed from the Court hearing, and the Judge can impose a fine or other punishment.

• **Recording/Photographs/Reproduction:** Any video recording, audio recording, photographing, taking screenshots, and/or reproducing of the livestream is strictly prohibited. The recording, publishing, broadcasting or other copying or transmission of courtroom proceedings by video, audio, still photography or any other means is strictly prohibited and is subject to the penalties for contempt of court. Observers should keep their video off and microphone muted.

Other Zoom Features

- Breakout Room: If two or more participants need to have a private conversation, the Judge can send them into their own meeting and then bring them back into the hearing when the conversation is over.
- Share Screen: This feature can be used to share documents that you have on your computer. The ability to present documents will depend on the courtroom. If a document needs to be shared with the participants, be prepared to show a PDF version from your computer with the “Share Screen” feature or in any other manner in which that court deems appropriate. The Host will be the only one to assign participants to share screen.
- Chat Room: This feature can also be used to send documents or messages. Some courtrooms may allow the chat rooms. However, you may not have a private chat with the judge at any time. If anyone uses the chat to have an ex parte communication (private chat) with the Judge, the Judge will let everyone know, and that person may be removed from the proceeding.
- Interpretation: An interpreter can join the Zoom meeting: To request an Interpreter for any language, email the court: info@31stdistrictcourt.net

Call-In Options

If you are unable to join using a computer, laptop, or smartphone, you may join the hearing by calling in. While you will not be able to see the other participants, and they will not be able to see you, you will still be able to hear each other.

The number to call to join the meeting can be found on the Zoom invite that was emailed to you or, the Notice to Appear that was mailed to you.

Please identify yourself when it is your turn to speak, please speak clearly and loudly so that everyone can hear you.

More Zoom Assistance

- For a short video on Joining a Zoom meeting for the first time (8:15 minutes in duration): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9isp3qPeQ0E>

Cannot Appear Via Zoom or Phone

If you cannot appear via Zoom or phone, please contact the court at 313-800-5248 or info@31stdistrictcourt.net.