



**Hon. Jerry W. Simoneaux, Jr.**  
Presiding Judge of Harris County Probate Court No. 1  
Assistant State Presiding Judge of the Statutory Probate Courts

## Remote Appearance Best Practices

Updated April 27, 2023

Two years ago, in anticipation of new rules allowing remote appearances, the Harris County Probate Courts invested significantly in new technology to make remote and in-person appearances easy and seamless. Earlier this year, the Supreme Court of Texas implemented rules making remote appearances permanent. Now, remote appearances are making our courts more accessible than ever before while significantly reducing costs.

With the experience of more than three years and thousands of remote hearings, we offer the following best practices to make your remote appearance successful.



Zoom is no longer a stop-gap measure to help move cases along under COVID restrictions. Rather, it has become a valuable tool of the profession. Attorneys should gain expertise on its use and invest in suitable equipment, such as microphones, cameras, internet service, and computers.



Remote participants must be in an enclosed room where disturbances and noises are unlikely to cause a disruption. It is suggested that attorneys have their clients and witnesses in their office if an appropriate space is not otherwise available to them.



Attorneys should do a test-run with their clients and witnesses at least a day before their hearing. Too often, courts spend valuable time helping someone with little or no familiarity with Zoom.

**Delays caused by inability to use Zoom may cause the hearing to be passed.**



Log onto Zoom 10 – 15 minutes prior to your hearing. Take this time to test your microphone and speakers.



Although Zoom can be used on a smartphone, most delays in hearings are caused by problems arising from their use. We strongly urge participants to use a laptop or desktop computer, instead. **Delays caused by smartphone use may result in the hearing being passed.**



**Appearances from vehicles are strictly prohibited and will cause the matter to be passed.**



Our courts use special Zoom modules designed for simultaneous spoken language and ASL interpretation. For best results, the person requiring interpretation should be in a separate room, apart from other participants, to be able to use the module to its greatest potential.



Even though participants may appear remotely, this is still a formal court proceeding. All parties and counsel are expected to dress appropriately and behave respectfully.

We look forward to your appearance in court, whether it be remotely or in-person. If you have any questions, our staff will be happy to help.

Thank you,

Jerry W. Simoneaux, Jr.  
Judge, Probate Court 1