

# **TARRANT COUNTY FAMILY DISTRICT COURTS' GUIDELINES FOR REMOTE HEARINGS**

(This applies only to the Courts that have signed these Guidelines)

The Governor has declared a state of emergency and the Office of Court Administration (OCA) has suggested that all non-critical court proceedings should be suspended. However, technology and state law allows options not previously available. As such, the Tarrant County Family District Courts will continue to conduct hearings if the parties have the technology and desire to do so. The following restrictions and limitations will apply, but they should be similar to what is required for an in-person hearing. Any request for a courtroom hearing will be considered, but likely postponed. It is anticipated most parties will agree to a "virtual" hearing.

## **GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR LITIGANTS**

The Tarrant County Family District Courts will be hearing most cases via remote means, including telephone and Zoom. It is free to download at [zoom.us](https://zoom.us), or you can download the app directly to your cell phone. The Court Reporter or Coordinator will email you a link to the hearing. In some Courts, it may be placed in the Notice of Hearing. If it is a Zoom hearing, your computer must have internet access, a video camera, and a microphone. **IF THE HEARING IS VIA ZOOM, AND IF YOU, A WITNESS OR A PARTY, CAN ONLY PARTICIPATE VIA TELEPHONE, YOU MUST COORDINATE IT THE DAY BEFORE WITH THE COURT REPORTER. PLEASE DO NOT INCLUDE ZOOM TELEPHONE NUMBERS ON THE NOTICE OF HEARING.**

Ensure the Court Reporter and Court Coordinator have your email address not later than 4 p.m. the day before any hearing. Because of the importance of the record, the judge or a court staff member will be the "host" of all hearings.

If you intend to offer any exhibits during the hearing, contact the court no later than 7 days before trial to obtain their individual guidelines regarding usage of exhibits during trial. The Court cannot consider any exhibits not sent according to the Court's individual guidelines a timely manner. If you fail to follow this requirement, the Court Reporter will not maintain these documents in the record. The manner may change when the Courts obtain dropboxes or other technology. Please check with each Court as setting each hearing.

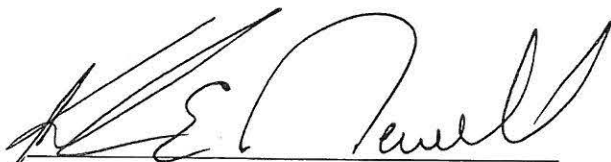
Attorneys should provide courtesy electronic copies of any motions, responses or replies that were e-filed with the Clerk less than 48 hours before the hearing; said copies should be emailed to the Court Coordinator and Court Reporter. Motions, responses, and replies emailed to the coordinator and reporter will NOT be considered filed and must be e-filed with the Clerk as usual. Case law for the judge's reference need not be e-filed with the Clerk, but should be emailed to the Court Coordinator and Court Reporter at least 4 hours before the hearing to allow consideration. Documents which have been e-filed and accepted need not be re-filed with the clerk.

Some of the Courts will begin handling non-emergency hearings. Each court may have more specific directives. Please contact individual courts for details.

**VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDING OF THE PROCEEDING IS PROHIBITED.**

**FOR THE PUBLIC:**

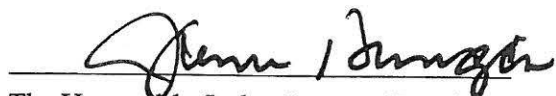
THE OPEN COURTS PROVISION OF TEXAS LAW ALLOWS ALL TEXANS ACCESS TO COURT PROCEEDINGS. AS SUCH, ANYONE MAY CALL THE COURT COORDINATOR OR BAILIFF TO OBTAIN ACCESS TO HEARINGS. THE PUBLIC MAY VIEW OR LISTEN TO PROCEEDINGS. VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDING OF THE PROCEEDING IS PROHIBITED.



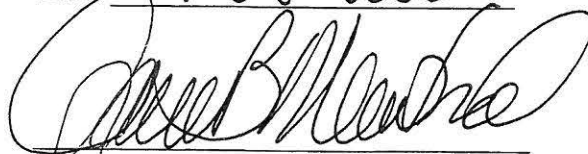
The Honorable Judge Kenneth Newell  
233<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District Court  
Date: 9/28/2020



The Honorable Judge Judith Wells  
325<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court  
Date: 9.28.2020



The Honorable Judge Jerome Hennigan  
324<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court  
Date: 9/28/2020



The Honorable Judge James Munford  
322<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District Court  
Date: 9-28-2020



The Honorable Judge Jesus Nevarez  
231<sup>st</sup> Judicial District Court  
Date: 9.28.2020



The Honorable Judge Patricia Bennett  
360<sup>th</sup> District Court  
Date: Sept 28, 2020

**YOUTUBE CHANNEL FOR 325<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT COURT: JUDITH WELLS**

**YOUTUBE CHANNEL FOR 325<sup>TH</sup> ASSOCIATE COURT: TARRANT COUNTY 325<sup>TH</sup>  
ASSOCIATE DISTRICT COURT**