

J. Dhu Thompson, Hearing Officer
Fifth Judicial District Court
P.O. Drawer 90
Rayville, Louisiana 71269
Telephone: (318) 728-4111
Facsimile: (318) 728-7003

**VIDEO AND CONFERENCE GUIDELINES FOR HEARING OFFICER
CONFERENCES**

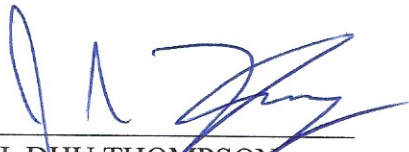
It is imperative that we keep the justice system running and prevent an insurmountable backlog of cases; therefore, for the foreseeable future, when all parties are willing and able, we will conduct hearings via Zoom. Unfortunately, this limits the types of evidence and testimony that can be presented. Accordingly:

- If you are an attorney or litigant and would like to proceed via Zoom, please contact our office to see if your case can be handled in this way.
- Conferences will take place at the regularly scheduled time assigned by the Hearing Officer secretary.
- The Hearing Officer Secretary will email the Zoom conference instructions the day before the conference. All parties must provide a valid email address to receive said instructions.
- Please check the standing order for mandatory rules regarding video conferences.
- For litigants that do not have access to Zoom, the Court will provide a room at the courthouse for their accessibility and convenience.
- Test your equipment a few minutes before every conference. A usually reliable microphone on a computer or tablet can glitch at the most inopportune time and identifying a problem in advance can give you time to use a telephone line for the audio portion.
- Make sure your camera is resting on a stable platform. Jiggly camera images are distracting and even disturbing to some people.
- Be aware of distracting noises in the background, such as other people in the office (or home), electronics, or other sounds. If appropriate, keep your microphone muted unless you are actively speaking in the hearing to keep the cumulative background noise to a minimum.
- Be aware of lighting. Try to have good illumination on yourself and any witnesses.
- Avoid multitasking. While this may be appropriate during a lecture or large group meeting, for status conferences or hearings, it is inappropriate and distracting.
- Be aware that different conferences have different requirements. For status conferences with the court, being closer to the camera is perfectly fine, since the point is communication, not testimony.
- If a client or witness is giving testimony, please have the camera positioned so that they are visible from the waist up, especially if they are not co-located with counsel. This avoids the accusation that a witness is holding anything to assist him or her in his or her testimony.
- Attire can also vary. For informal status conferences with the court, the court does not expect courtroom attire. However, tank tops and ball caps should be avoided as they would not be appropriate to wear into chambers at the courthouse. For actual video hearings, court attire should be worn. All proceedings will be both video and audio recorded and taking the

time to dress for court can help to remind everyone that while being done by video, the legal consequences for the parties affected are every bit as real.

- For cases that require in person testimony, the Court will arrange special settings for said cases.

Last revised April 30, 2020



J. DHU THOMPSON
Hearing Officer