

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

**(This only applies 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 should be similar to what is required for an in-person hearing. Any requests 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, you need to send them electronically to all parties, witnesses who may need to refer to the exhibit and the Court not later than 4 p.m. the business day before the hearing or trial. If they are sent via email, the subject of the email should be the full cause number and "-Petitioner Exhibits" (or cause number "-Respondent Exhibits"). The documents must be in .pdf format and labeled by Party and Exhibit number, e.g. "P Exhibit 1". The Court cannot consider any exhibits not sent electronically to the Court in a timely manner. If you fail to follow this requirement, the court reporter will not maintain these documents in the record. Please check with each Court to determine the manner which you are to send the exhibits to the Court. The manner may change when the Courts obtain drop boxes and/or other technology. Please check with each Court as setting each hearing.

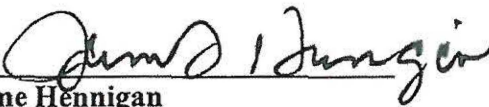
Attorneys should provide courtesy electronic copies of any motions, responses or replies that were e-filed with the Clerk less than 48 hours before the hearing; said copies should be emailed to the court coordinator and reporter. Motions responses and replies emailed to the coordinator and reporter will 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 reporter at least 4 hours before the hearing to allow consideration. Document 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.

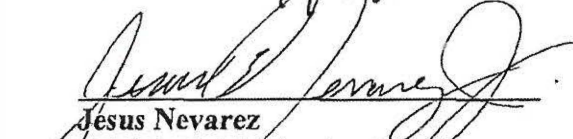
**VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDING IS PROHIBITED.**


**FOR THE PUBLIC:**

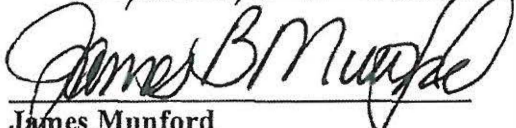
THE OPEN COURTS PROVISION OF TEXAS LAW ALLOWS ALL TEXANS ACCESS TO COURT PROCEEDINGS. AS SUCH, ANYONE MAY CALL THE COURT COORDINATOR OR BAILIFF TO GET ACCESS CODES TO HEARINGS. IF YOUR ARE VIEWING, PLEASE MUTE YOUR CONNECTION TO PREVENT DISRUPTION TO THE PROCEEDINGS. THE PUBLIC MAY VIEW OR LISTEN TO PROCEEDINGS.


  
Jerome Hennigan  
324th Judicial District Court  
Date: 4/6/2020

  
Judith Wells  
325th Judicial District Court  
Date: 4-6-2020

  
Jesus Nevarez  
231st Judicial District Court  
Date: April 3, 2020

  
Patricia Baca Bennett  
360th Judicial District Court  
Date: April 3, 2020

  
James Munford  
322nd Judicial District Court  
Date: 4-6-2020

  
Kenneth Newell  
233rd Judicial District Court  
Date: April 6, 2020

Digitally signed by Kenneth E. Newell, District Judge  
Date: 2020.04.06 09:06:42 -05'00'