

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE FIRST JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
WILLIAMSON COUNTY, ILLINOIS

FILED
MAY 05 2020
A. W. W. W.
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT

STANDING ORDER FOR REMOTE HEARINGS
IN FAMILY CASES

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has infected hundreds of thousands of individuals in this country thus far, causing tens of thousands of deaths;

WHEREAS, on March 9, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governor of the State of Illinois issued a disaster declaration for all counties in the state of Illinois. Thereafter, the Governor issued various Executive Orders closing schools and businesses (except essential businesses);

WHEREAS, the Illinois Supreme Court, in light of the disaster declaration and the Governor's Executive Orders, issued various Administrative Orders continuing all civil cases and certain criminal cases, as well as extending certain deadlines;

WHEREAS, the Court finds it necessary to conduct remote status hearings and other hearings in Family cases, in compliance with the Governor's and the Illinois Supreme Court's Orders, so that pending Family cases continue to progress towards resolution.

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing, it is ordered and adjudged as follows:

1. Until further order of the Court, all family status hearings will cease to be heard in person at the Williamson County Courthouse, but instead will be held virtually via the Zoom Cloud app. At the discretion of the Court, other family hearings may be held virtually via the Zoom Cloud app. This is a free app which may be downloaded onto a computer, tablet or smart phone.
2. Each person who wishes to participate in any hearing must register with Zoom and obtain a Zoom account. No person will be allowed to attend the hearing without a Zoom account.
3. For remote status hearings, where all parties are represented by attorneys, and settings are voluminous, attorneys shall participate in the status hearings via Zoom. Parties shall be excused from attending those status hearings.

For other remote hearings, held at the discretion of the Court, each party's attorney will receive notification of the Zoom ID code and password, as well as a telephone number for those without video capabilities. Persons without video capabilities may still participate in the hearing via audio once a Zoom account has been obtained.

In order to attend the hearing via Zoom, the meeting ID and password must be used. Therefore, each party must stay in contact with his or her attorney and must keep his or her attorney, as well as the clerk, advised of a current residence address, email address and telephone number.

4. For hearings that would be closed to the general public, only authorized individuals (i.e. those with an identifiable Zoom account who have been allowed into the Zoom hearing by the Court) should attend the Zoom hearing. Some hearings, such as Adoption hearings, are confidential and every effort should be made to prevent other persons from seeing or hearing any portion of the hearing. If a person would not be admitted to a courtroom for a hearing in your case, they cannot see or hear any part of the Zoom hearing. The Court takes this very seriously. A violation of this rule could result in contempt proceedings being instituted against the offending party.

5. Each person attending any hearing should insure that his or her name appears prominently in the Zoom account so that each person can be identified more easily and added to the hearing.

6. If possible, each person should use a wired internet connection. Most of the time a wireless connection will work, but fewer problems arise with the former rather than the latter.

7. Each person should appear by video if possible. There are many obstacles to using this communication platform for court purposes, but one of the primary concerns is identifying persons who speak, so they can be properly identified on the record.

8. Please test your video and audio **BEFORE** the hearing.

9. Please join the hearing **EARLY**. Once the hearing starts it may be difficult to add participants to the hearing. Further, once the hearing has begun, the hearing will be “locked.” **IF YOU LEAVE THE HEARING YOU MAY NOT BE ALLOWED BACK IN.**

10. Pursuant to 720 ILCS 5/14-2, it is illegal for anyone to record a conversation unless all parties agree. I do **NOT** agree to be recorded before, during or after the hearing. The only official record of this hearing is that which is being made by the court reporter. The Court takes this very seriously. A violation of this rule could result in contempt proceedings being instituted against the offending party.

11. Everyone will be asked to introduce himself/herself at the beginning of the hearing.

12. Each person should mute the microphone on your Zoom app to eliminate background noise until it is your turn to speak.

13. Now more than ever, only one person may talk at a time.

14. This Order may be amended or modified after best practices in conducting remote hearings are identified.

SO ORDERED

ENTER: 5/5/2020



CAREY C. GILL, CIRCUIT JUDGE