



Supreme Court of Illinois

November 21, 2019

REMOTE VIDEO PILOT PROGRAM ANNOUNCED FOR COOK COUNTY CIRCUIT COURTS

The Circuit Court of Cook County and the Illinois Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission (ATJ Commission) today have announced a partnership that will allow individuals to appear for cases remotely in three different Divisions of the Cook County Circuit Courts.

The Remote Video Pilot program will launch on December 2, 2019, and run through November 30, 2020. Two judges from each of the Chancery, County, and Domestic Relations Divisions will oversee the use of remote video in their courtrooms.

Illinois Supreme Court Rules 185 and 241 allow for remote appearances.

“As the Illinois Supreme Court identified in its recently published Illinois Judicial Branch Strategic Agenda, embracing technology to deliver court services is a vital and necessary way to respond to the changing needs in our communities,” said First District Appellate Court Justice Mary K. Rochford, Chair of the ATJ Commission. “The Commission on Access to Justice is pleased to partner with Chief Judge Evans and the Circuit Court of Cook County including Presiding Judges Jacobius, Sullivan, and Dickler on our first remote appearance pilot program. We believe using technology to broaden the ways litigants and attorneys are able to appear in court will reduce barriers some face in participating in their court case and improve judicial efficiency overall.”

In the Chancery Division remote video will be used for contested mortgage foreclosure cases on two calendars.

In the County Division remote video will be used for mental health proceedings such as a mental health case management call one day per week and for unique situations such as issues where a party is located in a different county or state and a video proceeding would allow a more efficient disposition.

In the Domestic Relations Division remote video will be used for one individual calendar status call and one individual calendar post-decree call.

“As we look at ways to enhance access to justice in civil cases, video appearances will allow litigants to agree to participate in court in a convenient way,” Chief Judge Timothy C. Evans

said. “For example, a litigant in a foreclosure or divorce can download an application on a cellphone and appear in court on a break from work. For mental health proceedings, the judge may visit multiple hospitals in one day via video conferencing, as opposed to traveling to each facility to hold court. Doctors and health-care staff may address the court from their offices, saving them the time it takes to travel downtown. I thank the Illinois Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission for providing this service, and we look forward to reviewing the results.”

Software from Zoom Video Communications will be provided by licensure from the ATJ Commission and will allow for a court proceeding to take place without all parties being present in the court room. The judge will launch Zoom and will be visible to any party or attorney that joins the court proceeding via Zoom. The ATJ Commission will be involved in drafting plain language instructions for attorneys and parties participating in the video pilot program.

Data will be collected during the pilot’s run to determine the practicality of broader expansion throughout Cook County as well as possible statewide expansion.

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