

Virtual Hearing Policy

Purpose:

This section outlines the procedures and guidelines for conducting virtual hearings in County Criminal Court #11. The goal is to ensure that all parties can participate in court proceedings remotely while maintaining the integrity and efficiency of the judicial process.

Scope:

This policy applies to all virtual hearings conducted by County Criminal Court #11, including those involving defendants in custody, defendants out on bond, attorneys, interpreters, witnesses, and court staff.

Policy Statement:

County Criminal Court #11 conducts hearings virtually whenever needed or requested, using the Court Call platform. This allows all parties to participate in court proceedings remotely, ensuring access to justice while accommodating various circumstances.

Procedures:**1. Scheduling a Virtual Hearing:**

- When a virtual hearing is needed or requested, the court coordinator will contact the defense attorney to confirm their availability.
- Once availability is confirmed, the coordinator will schedule the hearing and provide the time to all involved parties.
- The court coordinator will email the necessary Court Call links to the judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, defendant, interpreter (if needed), and witnesses.

2. Participation in Virtual Hearings:

- **For All Parties:** At the designated time, all parties must click the provided link to access the virtual court hearing via Court Call. It is the responsibility of each participant to ensure they have the necessary technology (phone, computer, internet connection) to join the hearing.
- **For Defendants in Custody:** Defendants in custody will be brought to a room equipped with a Court Call kiosk. The Dallas County Sheriff's Department will log into the kiosk remotely and join the hearing with the remaining parties. The defendant will stand in front of the kiosk during the hearing to hear and see all proceedings.
- **For Defendants on Bond:** Defendants who are out on bond will click the link provided by the coordinator from their own device (cell phone or computer) to join the virtual hearing.

3. Private Conversations:

- If a private conversation is needed during the virtual hearing, the judge or the defense attorney may request to move the parties into a subconference within the Court Call platform. This allows for confidential discussions without disrupting the main proceeding.

4. Technical Issues and Support:

- Should any participant experience technical difficulties, they are advised to contact the court coordinator immediately for assistance. The court will make reasonable accommodations to ensure that the hearing can proceed smoothly.

5. Documentation and Record-Keeping:

- The court coordinator is responsible for ensuring that all virtual hearings are documented appropriately and that any necessary records are maintained in accordance with court policies.

Responsibility:

- The court coordinator is responsible for scheduling virtual hearings, sending out links, and assisting with any technical issues that arise.
- All parties are responsible for ensuring they can access the virtual hearing and for participating fully in the proceedings.

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to reflect changes in technology, court procedures, or legal requirements