



In the Circuit Court of Jackson County, Missouri DIVISION 9 – Judge Joel P. Fahnestock

Tips for Effective Participation in Conferences and Hearings Using Telephone and Video Conferencing

Division 9 Conference Call Number: 1-408-418-9388, Access Code 966278533

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced courts around the country to make significant changes to the way they function so they can continue to perform their obligation to effectively and fairly administer justice – and do it safely. One of these changes is the increased use of telephone and video conferencing technology for certain conferences and hearings and to temporarily prohibit or limit the use of in-person proceedings. While the expansion of the use of these technologies is a result of current events, it is likely that courts will continue to use them as tools in the future where appropriate.

In using these methods of conducting hearings, the court has observed what enables them to be used effectively, and what can limit their effectiveness. Obviously, everyone participating in one of these proceedings is in a different circumstance. Some may be working remotely from home or elsewhere. Some may not have a “home office” free of small children or pets needing attention. Some may not have reliable access to computers, cell phones, a reliable internet connection, or access to the internet at all. Keeping this all in mind, the court has prepared these general guidelines with a view toward assisting attorneys and parties participate in such proceedings successfully. Contact the court with any questions or concerns.

General

- Make sure attorneys and self-represented parties have provided the court with their contact information, including a street address, telephone number, and e-mail address. While court rules only require the providing of an e-mail address if an attorney or party has one, everyone participating in the court process should make every effort to obtain

one. It is the primary and most efficient method of communicating with attorneys and self-represented litigants and – in the case of the court’s video conferencing tool – is the best way to receive instructions for logging into the proceeding and participating in it.

- Frequently check the status of your case via Case.net, the court’s website at www.16thcircuit.org, including each Division’s webpage (the Division 9 webpage is located at <https://www.16thcircuit.org/division-9-judge-joel-p-fahnestock->) and utilize Case.net’s “Track this Case” feature. Notices regarding the manner in which conferences and hearings will be conducted can often be found there. Through the “Track this Case” feature, attorneys, self-represented litigants, and parties can sign up to receive alerts regarding the filing of pleadings, entry of court orders, and scheduling of conferences and hearings. Instructions on utilizing this feature are attached and can also be found on the court’s webpage.
- Contact the court’s staff with any questions regarding any particular Division’s policies and procedures. Their contact information is on the court’s webpage.
- During both telephone and video proceedings, make sure to speak up, speak clearly, and speak one at a time. Most of these proceedings will be on the record, and the court reporter may be participating remotely, too. Speaking over one another during one of these conferences or hearings often results in nobody being heard. It is also helpful, especially in phone calls, for speakers to identify themselves before speaking, and for witnesses being asked questions to pause before answering to give an attorney an opportunity to object or the court to otherwise interject.
- Before telephone and video hearings, provide any exhibits you wish the Court to consider to the appropriate clerk. The best way to do this is to provide scanned copies via e-mail to the civil or criminal clerk. Contact the Division at 816-881-3609 if you have any issues or questions.

Telephone Conferences/Hearings

- You will be provided with a conference number and an access code which will enable you to dial in to the conference or hearing. It is best to dial in five to 10 minutes before the scheduled time as, with increased use of teleconferencing in the last few months, users have occasionally been told that “all circuits are busy” when they try to dial into a call. The court will be the host of the call so if you dial in before the court, you will be on hold waiting for the court to join the conference.
- Try to use a land line as opposed to a cell phone whenever possible. Try to find a quiet place inside from which to participate in the call that has as few background noises as possible. Children, pets, televisions and radios, fans, traffic, wind, and other outdoor noises are some examples of background distractions that can affect everyone’s ability to hear you, and the court reporter’s ability to make an accurate record.

- You will be asked to mute your phone until your case is called.
- When your conference or hearing is concluded, you can simply hang up.

Video Conferences/Hearings

- The court utilizes WebEx by Cisco for its videoconferences. Many of the suggestions above regarding finding as quiet a place as possible, etc., apply to video proceedings as well. You will need a computer that has a camera and microphone, or you can use a smart phone that has these features. Follow the instructions that are provided to you with the notice of the conference or hearing in order to join. If you do not have an e-mail address, notify the court, and you will be provided a phone number that will allow you to participate in the proceeding by phone.
- If you are participating from a computer, you will be instructed to run the WebEx program. If you are participating from a cell phone, you will be asked to download the WebEx app in order to join the meeting. The app is free.
- If your case is one of several being heard at the same time, you may be placed in a virtual “waiting room” until your case is called. If you are in a proceeding with many participants present, please mute yourself until it is your turn to talk to reduce background noise, feedback, etc. **IMPORTANT – unless you mute your connection or turn off your video, YOU WILL BE HEARD AND SEEN BY THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS AT ALL TIMES.**
- Be mindful of your surroundings and background and ensure that you would want others to be able to see them. Dress appropriately as though you were attending an in-person hearing in the courtroom. When you see yourself during the conference, make sure your computer is situated so you can be seen clearly and completely.
- Make sure you have as strong a connection to the internet as possible. If you are participating from a computer, consider whether you can use a “wired” connection to your internet router instead of a “wireless” connection. In addition, close any other applications on your computer or phone.
- Additional and more detailed tips for attorneys and other participants have been prepared by the court’s information technology department and are attached.

“Track Your Case” Instructions

1. Go to Missouri Case.net
<https://www.courts.mo.gov/casenet>

2. Select “**Search for Cases by**

Case Number” and enter your
case number

3. Select “**Track this Case**”

4. Provide your e-mail address and
mobile phone number if you want to
receive text alerts (text alerts optional)

5. Click on the applicable “**Notice
Option**” to receive reminders of
your court date/scheduled payments

6. Enter the special characters in the
verification box

7. Click on “**Track this Case**”*

**Information Provided is
Not an Official Court Record*