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VIRTUAL COURTROOM ETIQUETTE – FAMILY

The courtroom, whether a physical in-person courtroom, or a virtual courtroom using video or telephone technology, remains a formal setting.

All participants are asked to maintain court decorum in the virtual world, just as they would in person.

Everyone attending a virtual courtroom should observe the following rules:

Preparation

1. To minimize distractions during the court proceeding, log in a few minutes before the scheduled start time. This will allow you to test your connectivity and audio before the judge arrives.
2. If you wish to speak to Duty Counsel, you should make arrangements in advance of the proceeding by contacting Legal Aid at 1-800-668-8258.

Identification

3. Identify yourself when in the virtual meeting:
 - a. If you are appearing in a Zoom courtroom, try to ensure that you sign in using your first and last name so that your full name appears under your video image.
 - b. If you are unable to sign in under your own name initially, try to advise your lawyer, the opposing lawyer if you are self-represented or your worker if you are involved in a child protection matter so that that individual can advise the judge.
 - c. If you are a child protection agency worker, try to include that reference in your sign in name if possible (eg. “Jane Doe – Worker”).

- d. If you are appearing by phone, please disclose your identity immediately upon inquiry so that the court can rename you.

Video and Audio Capability

4. If you have video capability and your data plan allows it, please have your Zoom video turned on at all times.
5. Mute your audio when not speaking and do not speak over others. Raise your hand when you wish to speak.
6. The use of headsets, headphones or earphones can improve audio for many participants.

Attire

7. Dress appropriately for court when appearing via video. For lawyers, business attire is required.

Distractions

8. Make your best efforts to eliminate distractions. Try to locate a quiet area and minimize interruptions by others in the home. If there are other individuals within hearing distance, identify them to the court.
9. Make your best efforts to ensure that children are not within hearing distance and advise the court immediately if children are present so that discussions can be tempered accordingly.

Behaviour

10. Be courteous and respectful to all virtual court participants. Use good manners; ensure that your physical and facial expressions are appropriate and uphold the dignity of a court setting.
11. If the judge determines that you are behaving in a disruptive or abusive manner, he or she may remove you from the meeting.
12. Do not bring food to the virtual courtroom. This includes chewing gum.
13. When appearing via video, the only beverage permitted is water and it must be in a see-through glass or container.
14. Do not use tobacco or vaping products in the virtual courtroom.

15. Do not prop your feet up on a table or chair when appearing via video.
16. Do not walk around or step away during a video meeting. If you need to step away from the meeting or divert your attention away from the screen during the meeting, advise the judge and stop your video.

Recording

17. Unless authorized by the judge, you shall not make any recording of the proceedings or take photos or screen captures of the proceedings. It is an offence under section 136 of the *Courts of Justice Act*, and may constitute contempt of court, to record, photograph, publish or broadcast court proceedings without express permission of the presiding judicial official. Some proceedings may also have publication bans in effect, which make it a criminal offence to publish or broadcast certain information that may be referred to during a court hearing.

Additional Information

18. Additional information on best practices and etiquette for virtual hearings can be found at <https://www.ontariocourts.ca/scj/notices-and-orders-covid-19/remote-hearings/>