

ENGAGEMENT IN HEARINGS

Child Dependency Courts



During the pandemic, many courts shifted to virtual hearings to ensure that due process rights of children and families are protected while preserving public safety. Virtual hearings have emerged as a viable strategy to prioritize progress toward permanency and may also hold promise for timeliness and efficiency of regular court processes going forward. However, they also bring unique challenges to system communication and the ability of judicial officers to engage with families and professionals.



IN-PERSON HEARINGS have the benefit of being physically face-to-face which often provides the best environment for judicial officers, attorneys, and other professionals to engage with families.

VIRTUAL HEARINGS have the potential to increase engagement in some areas because it mitigates obstacles that have historically been barriers to participation, such as lack of transportation to court or competing work or family obligations. Virtual hearings are often better for many parents, youth and caregivers who have experienced previous trauma.



Offering a **COMBINATION** of virtual and in-person hearing options based on the specific needs of a court system could prove helpful in accommodating the various needs of individual court users and balancing the preferences of the court system professionals.

For example, courts could require that all parties appear in-person for Shelter Care Hearings, but allow virtual attendance for Dependency Review Hearings.

GETTING READY FOR A DEPENDENCY HEARING VIDEO SERIES

The below videos were created to help families prepare for and connect to virtual hearings through Zoom or WebEx.



Preparing for Your Dependency Hearing

Whether attending a dependency hearing in-person, by phone, or virtually, this video will give you some tips to be better prepared.

Available in English & Spanish

[Learn More](#)



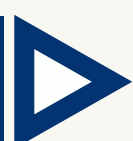
Connecting Using Zoom or WebEx

This video gives a step-by-step directions for joining a hearing from a smartphone, tablet or computer.

Available in English & Spanish

[Learn More](#)

Available to Share



These video are available for court and systems partners to share with parents, youth, and families as a resource for engaging in virtual dependency court hearings.

Use the QR code on the right or go to www.wacita.org/videos to learn more about the videos and **promotional materials** available for download.



OTHER RESOURCES

- [Remote Proceeding Toolkit \(ncsc.org\)](http://ncsc.org)
- [Hybrid Hearings Improvement Initiative | NCSC](#)
- [Working with People Under Stress Communication Tips](#)



For questions please contact [Family & Youth Justice Programs](#)