



State of South Carolina
The Family Court of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit

Robert Newton
Judge

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MEMORANDUM

To: Family Law Practitioners in the 11th Circuit
From: Robert Newton
Subject: Virtual Courtrooms
Date: December 9, 2020

The Chief Justice has issued a memorandum stating that all remote proceedings in Family Court should be held using the new Virtual Courtroom via WebEx Events software beginning Monday, December 14, 2020.

This is still a WebEx based system. The majority of the features are the same as those you are accustomed to and have been using for remote hearings already. The primary difference is that you will no longer receive an individual WebEx meeting invite for each hearing as an invitation or access code is not necessary to access a judge's Virtual Courtroom. All a participant will need to access the Virtual Courtroom is the name of the judge hearing the case and the date and time of the hearing.

The SC Judicial Branch has created the "WebEx Meeting Guide for General Public - Virtual Family Courtroom" which is located at this link:

http://media.sccourts.org/webexuserguides/Family_Public_Virtual.pdf

I would strongly encourage you to review this guide carefully as it lays out in detail how to use the Virtual Courtroom as well as the expectations regarding those who are participating in such remote hearings. I would also encourage you to share it with your clients and witnesses you anticipate participating in any remote hearings in family court as it addresses proper decorum and other guidelines regarding remote hearings in addition to Virtual Courtroom access.

As the name "Virtual Courtroom" implies, entry and exit from the hearings will be more like a real courtroom operation where you wait in the "lobby" until admitted into the courtroom. The judge will see a list of participants waiting in the lobby and will select who to admit from that list for each hearing. I would suggest anyone expecting to participate in a Virtual Courtroom

proceeding be sure they have entered their full name in the access information or their WebEx setup as it will assist the judge in determining who to admit (i.e., “John Doe” instead of just “John”). Please note that audio and video participation is expected under the current orders. A “call-in” user is identified to the court only by a partial phone number and, therefore, the court may not be able to determine if they should be admitted without significant delay.

At this time we expect to continue the current practice of scheduling as many motions as possible for remote hearings. It is anticipated that the Virtual Courtroom will allow us more flexibility in scheduling matters and allow for a more efficient use of our remote dockets. Thank you all for your continued efforts to adapt and move forward as we are able to implement improvements and new technology.