

INFORMATION ABOUT ZOOM VIDEO MEDIATION

June 16, 2020

In the Maine courts, mediation in your Family Matters case now takes place by telephone or video. No mediation happens in the courthouse during the Covid-19 public health emergency. You will hear more about these options when you speak with the judge or magistrate about mediation. You can let the judge or magistrate know if you choose to mediate by telephone or video.

If you mediate by video, you will use Zoom. Here are tips for how to use Zoom for mediation.

What You Need for Video Mediation With Zoom

Strong Internet access. You will need a strong, stable internet signal to use Zoom. A strong WIFI signal or ethernet connection will be key to a successful mediation.

Connection to a power source. Be sure that your device (computer, tablet, or phone) is connected to a power source or you have a power cord with you to charge your device. Mediation can take two to three hours, and you don't want the battery to run out.

Private space. You will need a private, quiet location where you won't be interrupted and can speak freely about all of the issues in your case. Due to the confidential nature of mediation, a public place (such as a library or coffee shop) will not work well for mediation. You and the other party need to use separate devices in different locations.

No Children Present. Children may not be present or hear the mediation session.

How Do I Get Started?

The court will tell you the date and time of mediation. The mediator will send you an email message with an invitation and link to join the Zoom mediation at the time mediation is scheduled. In the invitation, click the *Join Zoom Meeting* link with your laptop, iPad or other tablet, desktop computer, or smartphone.

Using Zoom for Video Mediation. You don't need to download the Zoom app (unless connecting with your smartphone, as discussed below), but it's helpful if you download Zoom before the scheduled time of mediation.

Go to <https://zoom.us/> and click the *Sign up, It's Free* button at the top right of the screen, OR

Go to <https://zoom.us/> and click Resources at the top right of the screen and the *Download Zoom Client*. You would need to download only the Personal Use Plan software and/or app and open a free personal account.

To connect on an iPhone or Android phone, you need to download the *Zoom Cloud Meetings* app.

You can learn about the operation of Zoom before mediation. Zoom has video tutorials available at <https://support.zoom.us>.

Using Zoom for Audio Only. You can also join Zoom mediation by phone instead of video. You will hear audio (sound) only. The Zoom invitation will provide phone numbers and passcodes that you can use to join the meeting using your phone. Dial one of the phone numbers, enter the meeting ID #, enter the passcode, and wait to be admitted by the mediator.

How Does Zoom Mediation Work?

Join the meeting and wait in the waiting room. Before the day of mediation, the mediator will email you a Zoom meeting invitation with the link for mediation, passcode, and telephone numbers if you want to join using your phone. Click the link (or dial a phone number) and enter the passcode to join the mediation a few minutes before the start time of mediation. You will be admitted to an online “waiting room” that will be silent. You and the other party will not be able to speak with or see each other in the waiting room. Be sure your video/audio functions are turned on. The mediator will admit you briefly to the “main” meeting room to say hello. Each person is admitted separately. You will be the only person speaking with the mediator at that point.

Breakout rooms and caucus. The mediator will immediately move you to a “breakout room.” The breakout rooms are separate spaces from the main meeting. You can talk without others hearing you. (You can hear only other people you see or whose presence by phone is shown on the screen.) If you have an attorney, your attorney will be in the same breakout room with you. You may also have a support person, including a domestic violence advocate or case worker, in the breakout room with you. Let the mediator know if you have a support person attending mediation with you.

The mediator will join you in the breakout room for an initial private meeting with you (and your attorney, if you have one, or a support person). The mediator will ask you who else is there and ask you to rotate your camera. If there is a guardian ad litem (GAL), DHHS Support Enforcement Agent, or Assistant Attorney General attending mediation, they could also meet with you in a breakout room at some point.

Joint mediation session. After talking with each party, the mediator may bring both of you back to the “main” meeting room for a joint discussion. If you do not feel safe talking with the other

party by video, tell the mediator privately in the breakout room. You should talk with the mediators instead of texting or using “chat” with the other party.

Guidelines

Confidentiality. Only the people you see on your screen (or see with a graphic of their phone) can hear what is being said. The mediator will explain the rules of confidentiality to you.

No Recording. You are not permitted to record any part of the mediation. Turn off all devices like Alexa and other smart speakers in the room.

No Texting. Do not text or chat with the other party privately during the mediation. Please talk to the other party only with the mediator (or attorneys).

How Do I Sign the Court Forms and Get Copies?

Agreements and court forms. The mediator will fill out a report about mediation called the Report of Completed Mediation Session. When the mediator types this form, you will see it on the screen, or the mediator will read it to you.

If you and the other party make agreements, the mediator will type your agreements on a court form called the Points of Agreement. You will have a chance to see the agreements. The mediator will show them on the screen or might email a draft to you.

Signing the forms. After you have an opportunity to read the typed forms, the mediator will ask you if the form is correct. The mediator will type “/s/” and your name on the signature lines on the form and ask if you agree that your signature can be presented in this way.

Copies. The mediator will email completed forms to parties, attorneys, and other professionals involved in the case.

Troubleshooting

If you are disconnected from video mediation, you can re-join the mediation by clicking the Zoom link again. The mediator will need to admit you again. You can also call the phone number listed on the Zoom invitation to join for audio (sound) only.

You can also **call, text, or email the mediator**. You will have the mediator’s email address and phone number from the Zoom invitation, or the mediator will provide it to you at the start.