

COVID-19 REMOTE PARTICIPATION HEARINGS

Accessing remote participation for all parties required to appear via videoconferencing – Quick Reference Guide

8 April 2020

We are continuing essential court hearings during the COVID-19 Alert Level 4 lockdown. Physical distancing (limiting in-person contact) is in place to protect the health and safety of the public and our staff.

This guide provides an overview of remote participation, explains why it is necessary and what the courts require of parties participating remotely.

Remote participation

In a remote participation hearing, some or all participants, in some cases including the judge and the court registry officer (CRO), attend via videoconference (VC) or teleconference (phone). The decision on whether participants are required at a courthouse rests with the presiding judge.

Why it is necessary

Remote participation is necessary to reduce the number of people entering and moving around the courthouse each day. This means people can keep appropriate physical distance when they are required to be at the courthouse.

How remote participation works

Before a remote participation hearing is due to begin, the CRO will connect all parties to a virtual meeting room (VMR). The VMR can be used for both VC and phone. This is done by connecting:

- the judge using one VMR
- all other parties (excluding the defendant) using a second VMR
- the defendant using an audio-visual link (AVL) (Corrections custody) or a third VMR (Police, Oranga Tamariki custody or Corrections custody where AVL is not available).

Accredited media have a right to attend hearings in all but exceptional circumstances. They may join the VC on the basis that they remain muted and do not record sound or capture video without the express permission of the judge. The judge will decide if there is anything the media cannot report.

Some parties, such as victim advisors, should attend by phone only and not by VC.

What the Courts require of parties

You will need to use Jabber Guest to attend hearings by VC. See the *Jabber Guest Quick Reference Guide* for more detailed information about setting up and using Jabber Guest on your PC, laptop or mobile device.

Attending via VMR

Before your hearing, you will receive an Outlook invite to attend via VMR. This email will provide you with the details to connect to the VMR.

If your internet connection is not strong enough for VC, you can connect to the VMR with audio only. You can also attend by phone, using the phone number provided with the VMR connection details.

If it is not possible for you to attend the hearing remotely, please advise the Court and seek approval to attend the hearing in person.

The diagram below illustrates how the different remote participants connect to the hearing.

