

Options for Victim Participation in Zoom-Based Court Proceedings

Prepared by the Office of Court Operations. Last updated April 13, 2020.

Purpose

The following is intended to describe some of the options for crime victims (victims) to observe or participate in court proceedings held using Zoom videoconferencing. These options can also be used to allow other individuals who have an interest in the case to observe or participate in a proceeding. Two Zoom tools (Waiting Room and Breakout Room) are available to help facilitate victim observation and/or participation. These tools are described below.

Note: Any reference in this document to “host” also applies to those who have been granted “co-host” status by the judge, such as a clerk or judicial assistant.

Options for Victim Observation

For victims, there are three main options for observing Zoom proceedings:

1. Watch the proceedings as they stream on YouTube;
2. Participate by video via Zoom using a computer, tablet, or smartphone; or
3. Participate by audio (no video) using a phone.

Option 1: Watch Live Stream of Zoom Proceedings on YouTube

If Zoom-based court proceedings are being broadcast live on YouTube, victims can observe by watching on a computer, tablet, or smartphone.

Advantage: Victims can observe proceedings on YouTube while remaining anonymous.

Disadvantage: There is no opportunity for victims to participate in hearings or communicate with those in the hearing.

For more information regarding how to stream live on YouTube, see the following CCAP guide:

<http://courtnet.wicourts.gov/education/ccap/docs/livestreamyoutube.pdf>.

Option 2: Participate by Video via Zoom Using a Computer, Tablet, or Smartphone

Victims who wish to observe (or participate) by video can do so with a smartphone, tablet, or computer. Smartphone users must download the Zoom app in order to use the video function. Victims can control whether they join using video only, audio only, or both. If internet speed is an issue and the video feature is unstable, victims may watch the video on a computer or tablet and listen to the audio through their phones.

Advantages: Victims can actively participate in the proceeding and communicate with the court, attorneys, or advocates regarding the case if necessary. Also, the court can allow victims to confer privately with counsel or advocates by sending them into a Breakout Room (see below for more information on this function).

Disadvantage: The victim’s name/image is visible to all participants in the proceeding, as well as to anyone watching the live video stream on YouTube, unless this information is altered by the victim or the court.

Note: When joining a Zoom call using a computer or tablet, victims can change how their name or phone number is displayed. Victims joining by phone do not have this option.

Option 3: Participate in a Zoom Meeting by Phone Only

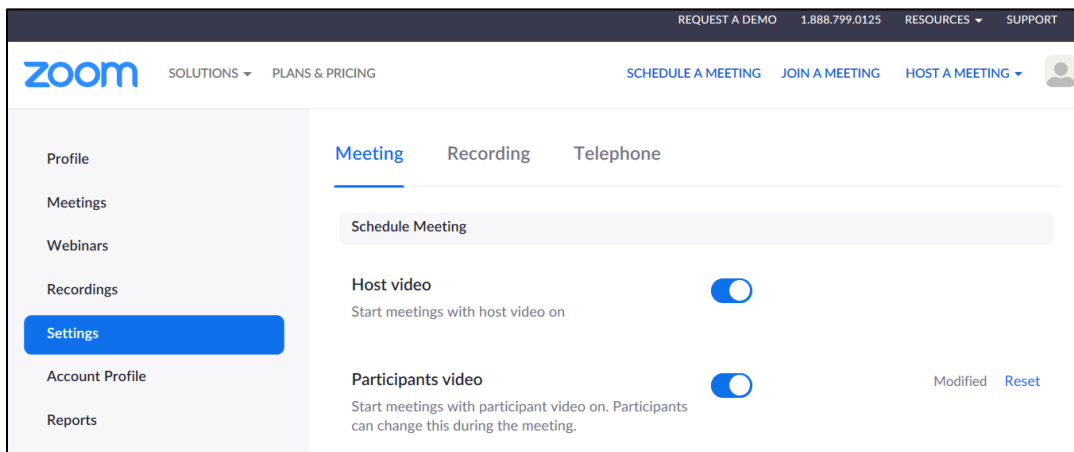
If a victim prefers to participate by phone only (no video), he or she can dial one of the phone numbers for the proceeding that are provided with the Notice of Hearing. Victims do not need the Zoom app or a computer to participate by phone.

Advantages: Victims can actively participate in the proceeding and communicate with the court or attorneys regarding the case if necessary. In addition, the victim’s image will not be displayed on the live YouTube stream.

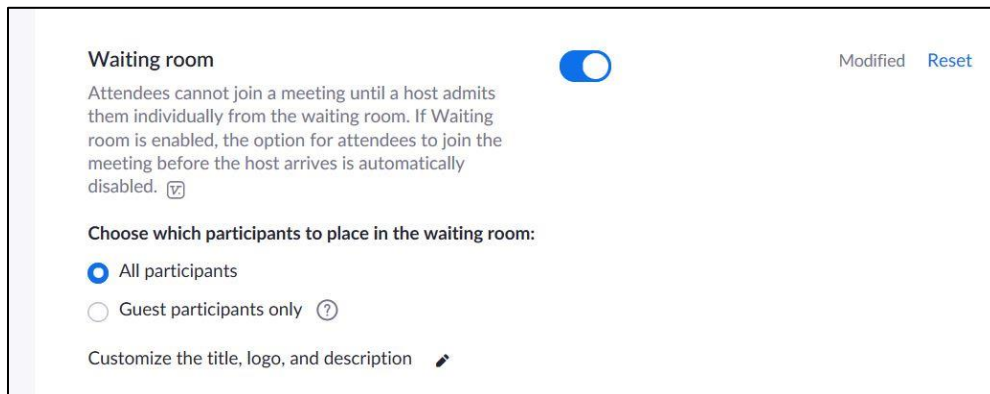
Disadvantage: The victim’s phone number is visible to all participants in the proceeding, as well as to anyone watching the live video stream on YouTube, unless this information is altered by the court. (See “Protecting Victim Names and Phone Numbers in Zoom” procedures below.)

Using the Waiting Room in Zoom

When using Zoom, the closest approximation of having victims and witnesses wait in the hallway until their case is called is to use the **Waiting Room** function. To use the Waiting Room, the host must ensure that the function is enabled in the settings menu prior to the hearing. To do this, go to Zoom.us, log in to the Zoom account, and choose the “Settings” button on the left side. Three options - Meeting, Recording, and Telephone – should appear.



Click Meeting and scroll down to the “In Meeting (Advanced)” section to find the “Waiting Room” function.



The host can change the text visible to participants when they enter the Waiting Room but cannot alter it during the meeting. Click on “Customize the title, logo, and description” to change from the standard message of “Please wait, the meeting host will let you in soon.” Some judges add identifying information such as county name and branch number. Participants in the Waiting Room cannot see or hear one another. Because the “Chat” function is disabled at the administrator level in court user accounts, there is no ability for the host or anyone else to communicate with those in the Waiting Room.

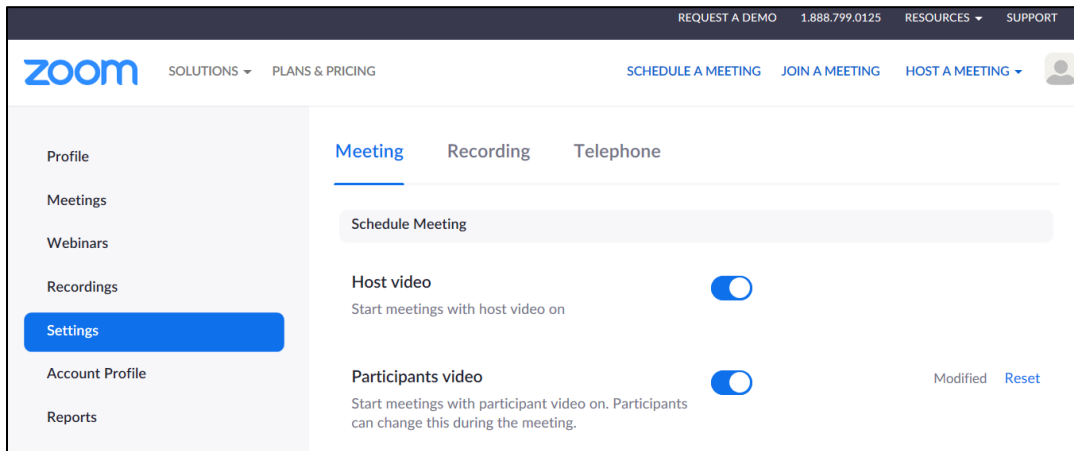
If a victim joins the Zoom call by phone and the Waiting Room function is enabled, they will hear a standard message saying, “You have been put on hold by the host. You cannot listen or talk until the host releases the hold.”

Please visit this resource for more information on using the Waiting Room function:

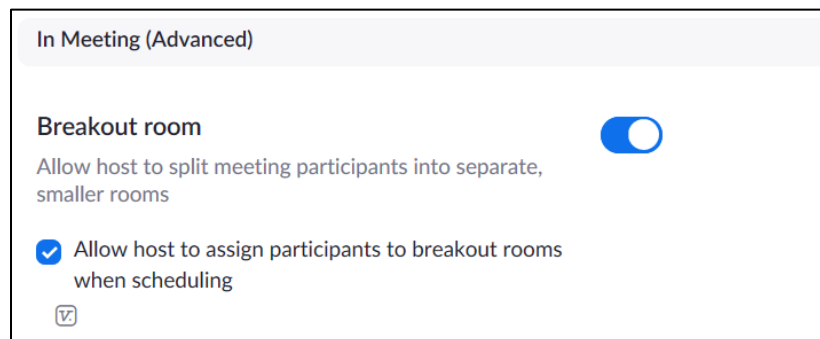
<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115000332726-Waiting-Room>

Using Breakout Rooms in Zoom

Another Zoom tool is the Breakout Room function, which must be enabled at the individual account (judge) level prior to the hearing. To do this, go to Zoom.us, log in to the Zoom account, and choose the “Settings” button on the left side. Three options - Meeting, Recording, and Telephone – should appear.



Click Meeting and scroll down to the “In Meeting (Advanced)” section to find the “Breakout Room” function.



If victims are participating by phone, the host can still assign them to a Breakout Room. Those on the phone will hear a standard audio message indicating that they have been placed in a Breakout Room.

Once the Breakout Room is closed by the host, callers can push the pound (#) button to return to the main room immediately or be sent back automatically when the Breakout Room closes.

How Do Waiting Rooms Differ From Breakout Rooms?

Waiting Room	Breakout Room
Participants in the Waiting Room cannot interact with one another or with the host until the host admits them to the meeting.	Participants in the same Breakout Room can interact with one another (such as an advocate or victim/witness coordinator).
The host can choose to admit participants from the Waiting Room at different times. Anyone not admitted by the host remains in the Waiting Room.	Participants can choose to leave a Breakout Room and re-enter the meeting at any time. When Breakout Rooms are closed by the host, all participants are brought back to the main meeting within 60 seconds.
The static message seen by those in the Waiting Room can be customized in the Settings menu by the host (prior to the meeting). It can't be changed during the meeting.	The host can broadcast a message to Breakout Rooms. The same message is sent to all participants on the call, regardless of whether they are in the Breakout Room or in the main session.

Protecting Victim Names and Phone Numbers in Zoom

If a victim calls in to a Zoom meeting, the caller's phone number is typically visible to all participants, even if the caller has a blocked number. Names and numbers visible during the Zoom call can be seen by all participants and by members of the public watching the YouTube live video stream.

To manually change the victim's display name or phone number, the host can click on the "Participants" menu. In the list of people, click on the "More" button next to the name of the person whose display name or number should be altered and then change it. Depending on when the victim joins the proceedings, there are different options for manually changing the caller's display name/number.

At the beginning of the proceedings: If the name or phone number of the victim should be protected, the host can admit the victim from the Waiting Room before anyone else, change the victim's name or number display, and then send the victim back to the Waiting Room, where they will remain until called. The host should not begin broadcasting on YouTube until changes to protect identifying information have been made.

While proceedings are already underway: If a victim is expected to join proceedings already underway but his or her identifying information should be protected, the host can send all participants into a Breakout Room or into the Waiting Room, admit the victim, change the victim's display name and/or number, and then re-admit other participants. The host should stop YouTube broadcasting while making changes to protect identifying information, and then start broadcasting again after the name and/or number has been changed. To stop the YouTube broadcast, the host can click on the "... More" option at the bottom of the Zoom window and select "Stop Live Stream."

Note: Under the "Settings" menu in Zoom, there is an option under the "Telephone" section (to the right of Meeting and Recording) to mask phone numbers. However, even when using this function, the area code and last 3 digits of the caller's phone number are displayed.

Another option for protecting a victim's phone number is to have victims call using a phone number that is not theirs, such as a victim/witness coordinator line. As a result, this alternate phone number will display during the Zoom proceeding, rather than the victim's number.

General Reminders:

- Regardless of the method of participation, the host can always control whether victims and other participants can see, speak, and hear during Zoom proceedings. The host can also stop the YouTube stream at any time. To stop the YouTube broadcast, the host can click on the "... More" option at the bottom of the Zoom window and select "Stop Live Stream."
- Ensure that the DA's Office communicates to victims the Zoom meeting details, dial-in numbers, and instructions for locating the appropriate YouTube channel.