

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY
COUNTY DEPARTMENT, DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISION**

GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 19 D 4

**SUBJECT: REMOTE VIDEO PROCEEDINGS PILOT PROGRAM
DOMESTIC RELATIONS CASES**

The Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice (ATJ Commission) implements projects throughout the State of Illinois to enhance access to justice and improve the court user experience with a focus on removing barriers for self-represented litigants. The ATJ Commission also engages in programs to support and simplify the use of remote technology that can be used in some situations to connect attorneys, interpreters, and litigants with the court system in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

In an effort to maximize access to the courts and judicial efficiency, the Domestic Relations Division will implement a pilot program for Remote Video Proceedings (RVP) in select cases as allowed by Illinois Supreme Court Rules 185 and 241. This RVP Pilot Program will be in addition to the current system the Division uses for holding video proceedings with prisons. Since 2016, the Domestic Relations Division has used a Polycom Video Conference system to conduct hearings with inmates throughout the state who have a proceeding pending in Cook County. This new pilot program will work along with the Polycom system and will not disrupt communications with litigants housed by the Illinois Department of Corrections. The new RVP Pilot Program will allow the division to test video proceedings in more routine matters to help all litigants gain easier access to the courts for proceedings or matters in domestic relations cases. The program further allows the court to capture statistics and feedback from litigants and attorneys to determine the practicality of broader expansion throughout the Cook County Court system.

In addition to domestic relations cases, the pilot program is also being tested in the Chancery Division (Mortgage Foreclosures) and the County Division. Under the pilot program, the court will capture statistics and feedback from litigants and attorneys to determine the feasibility of broader expansion throughout the Cook County Court system.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

1. Definition of "Remote Video Proceeding." A "remote video proceeding" (RVP) is a proceeding related to domestic relations cases conducted by two-way electronic audiovisual communication between the defendant, plaintiff, any witnesses (if applicable), and the court, in lieu of the physical presence of both parties in the courtroom. A RVP may take place with all parties located at different locations or one or more parties located in court and the other parties at remote locations.
2. Scope of the RVP Pilot Program and Eligible Cases. The RVP Pilot Program will be available for cases assigned to and deemed eligible by the judges presiding over individual Calendar 23 for a status call on a date to be set by the judge presiding over Calendar 23. The program will also be available for post-decree cases assigned to and deemed eligible by the judge presiding over Calendar 45 on Thursdays. In addition to the designated status and post-decree cases, any case deemed eligible by the Presiding Judge of the Domestic

Relations Division shall be eligible to participate. The RVP Pilot Program will begin on December 2, 2019. After six months of the RVP Pilot Program, the court will make a determination as to whether to continue the program, expand the program to additional calendars and cases in the Domestic Relations Division, or terminate the program.

3. Ineligible Cases. The court has the discretion to not allow RVP in a case that the court determines is not appropriate for the RVP Pilot Program.
4. RVP Forms. If one or more parties request an RVP on an eligible case, or the judge assigns the case to RVP, the parties will receive an Instruction Sheet and the court will enter an order setting the case for a RVP.
5. Conduct at the RVP. An RVP is the same as an in-person courtroom hearing. Parties who fail to show up for the RVP, or fail to show up in a timely manner, risk the same consequences as a failure to appear at an in-person hearing in the courtroom. This requirement will not be in effect if there is proof of a technical malfunction. Judges may also choose to electronically sign orders pursuant to the Illinois Supreme Court Electronic Signatures Standard and make the orders available through the videoconferencing technology being utilized.
6. Authority of the court to require physical presence of plaintiff, defendant, or any witnesses. Nothing in this general administrative order is intended to limit the authority of the court to issue an order requiring any party to be physically present in the courtroom for any proceeding or portion of a proceeding where the court finds that circumstances require the physical presence of the plaintiff or defendant in the courtroom.
7. Collection of information and reports. The court will collect and evaluate information about the RVP Pilot Program and will prepare a report for the ATJ Commission at the end of the initial six-months. If the RVP Pilot Program continues, quarterly reports will be provided to the ATJ Commission. Data collected will include, but is not limited to, surveys from user experience, number of cases participating, number of cases resolved through the RVP Pilot Program, number of parties appearing at each RVP, and other data the court deems useful to evaluation.

ENTER: Presiding Judge
Grace G. Dickler

SEP 25 2019

Circuit Court -- 1521

Date: _____, 2019

Grace G. Dickler
Presiding Judge
Domestic Relations Division