

# INFORMATION ABOUT ZOOM VIDEO MEDIATION IN EVICTION CASES

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In the Maine courts, mediation in eviction cases takes place by video or telephone. You do **not** go to the courthouse for mediation during the Covid-19 public health emergency. 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 On Zoom

**Strong Internet access.** You will need a strong internet signal to use Zoom for video. A strong WIFI signal or ethernet connection is 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 it. Mediation can take an hour or more, and you don't want the battery to run out.

**Private space.** You need to be in a private, quiet location where you won't be interrupted and can speak freely about 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.

For mediation, you and the other party need to use separate devices in different locations. Children should not be able to hear mediation, which can be upsetting to them.

**NOTE:** Witnesses (other than the named parties in the case) are not needed for mediation. They may not attend. This is not a court hearing in your case.

## How Do I Get Started?

The court will tell you the date and time of mediation. The mediator will send you an email invitation with a link to join Zoom at the time mediation is scheduled. Open the invitation email, click the *Join Zoom Meeting* link with your laptop, tablet, desktop computer, or smartphone. (The mediator might also be able to text you the invitation.)

**Using Zoom for Video Mediation.** You don't need to download the Zoom app, unless you're connecting to Zoom on your smartphone (see below). It can be helpful to 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 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 for sound only. You will hear audio (sound) only and will not see video. The Zoom invitation lists phone numbers and passcodes to use when joining mediation using your phone. Dial one of the phone numbers, enter the passcode number, and wait to be admitted by the mediator.

## **How Does Zoom Mediation Work?**

**Join the meeting.** Before the day of mediation, the mediator will email you a Zoom meeting invitation with the link for mediation, passcode number, meeting ID number, and telephone numbers. Click the link (or dial a phone number for sound only) 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.” You and the other party will not be able to hear or see each other in the waiting room. Be sure your video/audio functions (microphone and camera symbols) are turned on.

The mediator will admit you to the “main” meeting room. Each person is admitted separately. You will be the only person speaking with the mediator at that point. If you do not feel safe talking with the other party present, even by video or phone, tell the mediator.

When both parties (and attorneys, if any) are in the main meeting room, mediation will begin. The mediator will talk with all of you together at first, unless you ask to meet with the mediator separately or a judge has ordered you and the other party to meet separately.

**Breakout rooms and caucus.** The mediator may wish to talk with you (and your attorney, if you have one) separately, or you may ask to meet with the mediator. If so, the mediator will move you on the screen to a “breakout room.” The breakout rooms are separate spaces from the main meeting. You can talk without others hearing you. If you have an attorney, your attorney will be in the same breakout room with you. If you have a support person with you who was admitted to attend mediation, the support person could also be in the breakout room with you. The mediator will join you in the breakout room.

**Joint mediation session.** After talking with each party, the mediator might bring both of you back to the “main” meeting room for a joint discussion again, or the mediator might continue going back and forth to talk with each of you in separate breakout rooms.

## **Guidelines**

**Confidentiality.** Only the people you see on your screen (or see with a name or image of their phone) can hear what is being said. The mediator will explain the rules of mediation and 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 during the mediation. Talk to the other party only with the mediator (or attorneys).

## **How Do I Sign the Court Form and Get Copies?**

**Agreements and court form.** 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 show it to you after the form is filled out.

If you and the other party make agreements, the mediator will type your agreements on the form. You will have a chance to see the agreements in writing.

**Signing the form.** After you have an opportunity to read the form, the mediator will ask you if the form is correct. The mediator ask if you agree that your signature can be typed on the signature line with “/s/” and your name.

**Copies.** The mediator will email the completed form to parties and attorneys in your case.

## **Troubleshooting**

If you are disconnected from Zoom video mediation, you can re-join the mediation by clicking the Zoom link again or dialing the phone number on the Zoom invitation again. The mediator will need to admit you again.

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.

**The mediator will meet with you for mediation, but the mediator cannot help you with your case after mediation.**