

**CHILD PROTECTION COURT OF THE CONCHO VALLEY  
STANDING GENERAL RULES APPLICABLE TO ALL APPEARANCES**

**DECORUM**

1. Opening Procedure. Immediately before the scheduled time for the first court session on each day, whether virtual or in person, the Bailiff shall direct all persons present to their seats, or to turn on both audio and video capabilities, and shall cause the courtroom to come to order. As the Judge enters the courtroom, for in person proceedings, the Bailiff shall call the court to order. In a virtual setting, log on, then mute your device until announcements and/or called upon. If the courtroom is virtual for the hearing, the Judge will call the case and the parties will announce their presence, beginning with the Petitioner, next Respondent Mother's counsel, Respondent Mother, Respondent Father/s Counsel, Respondent Father/s, Child's AD Litem, Child's Guardian and finally any other parties such as intervenors or placement. When announcing their name and who they represent, counsel will also note for the record if they are ready to proceed.
  
2. General Rules of Courtroom Conduct.
  - a. All officers of the Court, and all other participants, except witnesses who have been placed under the Rule, shall promptly enter the courtroom before the scheduled time for each court session when in person, and shall log on to virtual proceedings *prior* to the start time. When the Bailiff calls the Court to order, complete order should be observed. This means that everyone in a virtual hearing should be present, with both audio and video capabilities, microphones muted.
  - b. In the courtroom, WHETHER VIRTUAL OR IN PERSON the following

conduct is NOT PERMITTED :

- 1). The use of tobacco or smoking of any kind;
- 2) Chewing gum, eating food, or drinking beverages other than those enclosed in bottles or containers with lids;
- 3) No consumption of alcoholic beverages;
- 4) No reading or using emails, text messages, Facebook, Instagram, snapchat or any other social media during the proceedings, the only exception would be communications between attorneys and clients during virtual procedures required by the court;
- 5) No food or food preparation;
- 6) No propping of feet on tables or chairs, moving from one place to another;
- 7) NO driving, participant must be in a set location for virtual appearances;
- 8) No obscene or inappropriate backdrops (please utilize background effects if necessary);
- 9) No talking that interferes with court proceedings;
- 10) Parties do not speak unless you are an officer of the court and/or you have been called upon as a witness, if you have a counter argument to make, please wait to be called upon, and in a virtual setting, raise the hand signal on the virtual platform to get noticed. DO NOT INTERRUPT;
- 11) Witnesses are not allowed to seek answers from anyone else during questioning. Do not speak to, or call upon anyone else who may be present in the room with you. If parties must appear using the same virtual setting, they must remain silent unless called upon by the court

or attorneys.

- 12) In person possession of knives or firearms;
  - 13) No use of any electronic device to record or photograph any court proceedings; Do not move any camera around to show any “evidence” or surroundings to the court;
  - 14) No use of cell phones or any other electronic device, except by attorneys with permission of the court.
- c. The Judge, the Attorneys, and other officers of the Court will refer to and address other court officers and participants in the proceeding respectfully and impersonally by using appropriate titles and surnames rather than first names. The form of address toward a Judge shall be “Your Honor”. Any reference to the Judge shall be to “The Court”.
- d. The oath will be administered in a manner calculated to impress upon the witnesses the importance and solemnity of the promise to adhere to the truth.

**FAILURE TO FOLLOW THE RULES OF DECORUM MAY RESULT IN A PARTY BEING ASKED TO LEAVE THE COURTROOM, OR REMOVED FROM THE VIRTUAL HEARING BY THE BAILIFF, AND THE HEARING MAY CONTINUE WITHOUT THE OFFENDING PARTY.**

#### **4. Conduct of Attorneys**

- a. Attorneys should observe the letter of all canons of ethics, including those dealing with discussion of cases with parties and those concerning improper ex parte communications with the Judge;
- b. Attorneys shall advise their clients and witnesses of local Rules of Decorum

that may be applicable, attorneys are responsible for impressing upon their clients the rules of the courtroom, whether virtual or in person, and the need for decorum;

- c. All objections, arguments, and other comments by the counsel shall be directed to the Judge or Jury and not to opposing Counsel, do not engage in direct communication while on the record in a hearing;
- d. While another Attorney is addressing the Judge or Jury, an Attorney should not stand or engage in distracting behavior unless making a proper objection;
- e. Attorneys should not approach the bench without leave of the court; should leave the courtroom only upon being granted permission to leave, and should never lean on the bench. Any need for conferencing during a virtual hearing should be properly raised, and parties should then wait for the breakout room before having any sidebar discussions
- f. Attorneys shall remain seated at the counsel tables for in person, and in a stable location for virtual, at all times except in a physical courtroom;
  - (1) when the Judge or Jury enters and leaves;
  - (2) when addressing the Judge or Jury; and
  - (3) whenever it may be proper to handle documents, exhibits, or other evidence. (Leave of court is required.)
- g. In any in person proceeding, Attorneys should anticipate any need to move furniture, easels or set-up electronic equipment and make advance arrangements with the Bailiff. Such moving or arrangements should not take place during court sessions, if at all possible.

Attorneys requiring the submission of evidence or presentation of materials during a virtual proceeding should follow the rules set out by the court for submission prior to the hearing, and provide copies of the same to the other

parties.

**5. Dress Code – Whether Virtual or In Person**

- a. All officers of the Court shall dress appropriate for court sessions; appropriate dress entails attire suitable for professional or business settings.
- b. ALL PARTIES should dress appropriately for court appearances, whether in person or virtual. This means clothes that have no holes, cut off sleeves, or shorts (that are not a uniform requirement). Jeans and uniform/work attire are appropriate if covering the shirt and pants area. Attorneys are responsible for informing their clients of this requirement. The following items are NOT APPROPRIATE:
  - (1) Tank Tops
  - (2) Cut off Shorts
  - (3) Pajamas
  - (4) Bathing Suits
  - (5) Ill-fitting clothes that expose large portions of the body
  - (6) Any clothing that is see through, or allows the undergarments to show
  - (7) Any hats or caps
  - (8) Robes or sheets
  - (9) Houseshoes
  - (10) Jurors, witnesses, parties and members of the public should not wear clothing displaying pictures or words that are derogatory, crude, offensive, profane or disrespectful to the court proceedings.

Any questions or concerns about these rules must be taken up with the court outside of the hearing setting.