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Coronavirus (COVID-19): Telephonic Hearings in Spokane County

What if the other side doesn't call in?

It depends.

- If you are the person who asked for the hearing, as long as you had them properly and timely served, you will get what you asked for in your motion. This is called a default.
- If you are not the person who asked for the hearing, the Court will probably strike (call off) the hearing or dismiss the case, depending on the type of action.

How do I get my court orders after the hearing?

The Court will send it to you by email or mail, whichever you prefer.

Do I need to do anything before the hearing?

You do not have to do anything special before the telephonic hearing. You will want to prepare whatever you want to say before the hearing.

Do I need a special phone?

No. You can use any phone you have.

How will I know what number to call?

The Court will put the phone number on the order setting the hearing. Read your court order very closely.

How will I know when to call?

The Court will put the time on the order setting the hearing. Read your court order very closely.

What will the hearing be like?

You will call in. The court will probably put you on hold for a minute to get all the parties on the line.

Once you are on the line, the judicial officer will confirm that both parties are on the phone. Then the judge will explain the process to you. After the judge explains the process, they will swear in you and the other party.

The person who is asking the court for something (the **petitioner**) gets to talk first. Then the person who is responding (the **respondent**) gets to talk. Finally the petitioner gets to talk again. Then the Judge will make their ruling.

After the Judge makes their ruling, the Judge will draft orders that mirror their oral ruling. To do that, the Judge may ask you or the other party some questions. Focus on answering those questions. Do not fight with the Judge about their ruling!

What if I need an interpreter?

You have the right to an interpreter at no cost to you. Call the Superior Court Administrator's Language Interpreter Services Office as soon as possible at 509-477-5790 or 509-477-4402.



Tips

- Try to find somewhere quiet to be on the phone. If you have kids, make sure you are not near them.
- Make sure you are on mute when it is not your turn to talk.
- When it is your turn to talk, talk slowly and loudly so the Court can hear you clearly. That can be hard when you are scared or stressed. Writing out what you want to say can help you not get overwhelmed.
- When you talk to the judge, start by saying "Your Honor."
- Try very hard not to interrupt anyone, even if the other person is saying something that you don't agree with or that is not true. **Never interrupt the judge.**
- This is still a court hearing even though it is happening over the phone. Try to keep your word choice court appropriate. Don't swear, don't yell, don't attack the other party.

- Always ask the Judge if they have any questions for you.
- It is always ok to ask the Judge questions if you don't understand or can't hear.
- If you need to explain something the other party said, wait your turn or ask to speak again.
- Use words, phrases and terms you understand.
- Do not ramble. Stick to the facts.
- Do not talk about issues that do not support your case.
- Take your time answering questions. Give a question as much thought as you need to understand it and come up with your answer. Explain your answer if needed.
- It is okay to admit that you do not know the answer to a question.
- If you are stating dates, times and places, be exact. If you cannot be exact, say you are only estimating.

If you are using an interpreter, here are some more tips:

- Speak slowly and take breaks so the interpreter can process information in chunks.
- Speak directly to the judge, not to the interpreter.
- Do not engage in outside communication with the interpreter.
- Let the interpreter do their job. Do not interrupt when the interpreter is speaking. If the interpreter gets something wrong, wait for them to finish talking. Then you can ask that the information be corrected.
- The interpreter can only translate what you are saying for the court. They cannot add any information or explain anything. Make sure you answer the questions asked of you.

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