



FAQ ON VIRTUAL CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS BEFORE JUDGE BRICKLEY

Court Address
212 E Paw Paw Street - Suite 212, Paw Paw, MI 49079

Court Telephone No.
(269) 657-8200

1. How do defense attorneys get clients to appear remotely?

- Click this link to join the virtual meeting room: [Virtual Room 1](#). Clients should appear via Zoom using 1 of 3 methods.
 - Zoom App
 - Zoom Laptop
 - Call in Phone Process (no app needed)
- If they do not have access to Zoom or phone, we will address that issue on a case-by-case basis. Some matters will need to be adjourned.

2. What if the defense attorney cannot get in contact with his or her out-of-custody client?

- These matters will be addressed on the record just like any other “no show.” We will sort through them. FYI, district court staff will be making every effort to get emails/cell phone numbers. Please feel free to reach out to us as we may have the information in the court file.

3. What if a victim wants to provide a victim impact statement and is unable to Zoom into a sentence?

- Victims may testify in person or by Zoom for sentence. We can attempt to assist a victim with appearing remotely. Please let us know ahead of time if you are aware of issues. Staff can try to work through them with you. If a victim simply wants to observe a hearing or sentence, he or she may access our livestream via YouTube. See next paragraph.

4. What if someone wants to observe a hearing or sentence?

- We are livestreaming proceedings via YouTube. The link is on the court’s website: <https://www.vbco.org/virtualcourt.asp>, where you will also find instructions to join the hearing via Zoom. Alternatively, the public can have expedited access to the proceedings in all courts via e-mail or flash drive if requested. During this crisis, we are waiving the fee.

5. How do we access necessary paperwork for a plea?

- All necessary forms such as the SCAO approved plea form and the advice of rights form can be found on our court’s website: <https://www.vbco.org/virtualcourt.asp>, Please make every attempt to have these items completed, signed, and emailed to us prior to the plea hearing. The website contains other forms you may need as well.

6. How are defendants directed to the MDOC for PSI or for Probation Supervision?

- **Out of Custody PSI’s:** If a defendant pleads guilty or no contest either in person or remotely, he or she must contact the MDOC within 24 hours by phone at 269-657-8214 Option 3 to start the PSI process. Please note that we will be emailing the MDOC Presentence Investigation Questionnaire to be completed by the defendant. If you provide us your client’s email prior to the plea hearing, we won’t need to put it on the record and take the time getting it and repeating it. If you prefer that the questionnaire be sent to defense counsel, we will do that. Counsel bears the responsibility to promptly get it to the client. Please note the questionnaire can be found on the court’s website, [MDOC Presentence Investigation Questionnaire](#). We will put this information on the record at the time of the plea. A defendant should attend the hearing with the ability to take notes.

- **Out of Custody Probations:** If a defendant is out of custody and ordered to serve a term of probation, he or she must contact MDOC within 24 hours by phone at 269-657-8214 Option 3, unless provided another number at sentence. If sentenced to a specialty court, the defendant will also be provided a contact number for his or her case manager. We will put this information on the record at the time of sentence. A defendant should attend the hearing with the ability to take notes.
- **In Custody PSI's:** Once a plea is taken and MDOC notified, the PSI writer will contact the jail to arrange for the defendant to receive the PSI questionnaire packet to complete. The PSI writer will then arrange an interview time to complete the presentence interview.
- **In Custody Probations:** If defendant is in custody at the time of sentencing and is remaining in jail for at least 24 hours, the probation office will conduct an orientation at the jail during that 24-hour period. If he or she is released from custody prior to going through the probation orientation, the defendant will need to call 260-657-8214 Option 3 within 24 hours of being released from custody to arrange for the probation orientation. We will put this information on the record at the time of sentence.

7. What if an out of custody defendant is ordered to jail or prison?

- Unless ordered otherwise, a defendant may appear via Zoom for sentence if he or she requests to do so and a valid waiver is placed on the record. If ordered to jail or prison, a defendant must report to the Sheriff's Department on the date and time given by the judge. Failure to do so will lead to an immediate bench warrant and other potential consequences such as contempt of court and additional incarceration.

8. How do defendants report to the Clerk's Office to set up payment plans or make payments?

- Payments can be made online, by mail, or at the court's drop boxes located outside of the buildings. The clerk's office is also taking appointments. Please see our Payment Options form for more details. https://www.vbco.org/downloads/vbc0711_payment_options_1.pdf

9. What if either side objects to matters being handled remotely?

- You may always object to the matter being handled remotely and the judge will rule on those matters on a case-by-case basis. As noted, some matters will simply need to be adjourned.

10. What are we supposed to wear in a remote hearing?

- Appropriate courtroom attire (business casual) is preferred. Please advise your clients to dress appropriately for court even if appearing remotely.

11. What if I have other questions?

- Please reach out via email or phone. A general listing of Van Buren County Court contacts can be found on our Emergency Operations Plan posted on our website. https://www.vbco.org/downloads/policy_2.pdf You may reach Judge Brickley's judicial assistant at: williamsm@vbco.org or 269-657-8200 ext. 2345. The Trial Court Administrator can be reached at hardesterf@vbco.org or 269-657-8200 ext. 2340.