



New York Civil Legal Services Community

Microsoft Teams for
Virtual Court Proceedings

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Speakers:

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Topics Covered:

- **Virtual Appearances**
Standards, Best Practices
Teams Platform Overview
Assistance and Support




Virtual Court Appearances

*Christine Sisario
C/O
Office of Court Administration*



Virtual Appearances – Best Practices

- All court participants should test and practice Teams platform in advance of first court appearance
- Make sure you and your clients connect to the appearance a few minutes prior to the scheduled appearance time to alleviate technical issues
- Participate from a quiet environment
- Stress to your clients that it is preferable to appear by video if possible
 - Best for the judge to see all parties and parties to see one another
 - When joining by telephone, there is no option to provide the name, resulting in a less accurate record
- Background image – consider a suitable, court-appropriate background or use the Blur Background option provided in Teams. Many backgrounds are available in Teams.



Virtual Appearances – Best Practices (con't)

- At the beginning of an appearance, parties should state:
 - They are not recording
 - They are not being coached by someone off-camera
 - There are no children or potential witnesses present
 - Who is with them in the room
- Remind everyone to mute microphones when not speaking.
- Utilize equipment that does not cause echoes.
- Remind all participants that they should conduct themselves as if they are physically in a courtroom. This is an official court hearing being held virtually.
- Lighting adequately is critical for all parties on camera.
- The Judge will direct the appearance and ask for participants to speak.



Virtual Appearances – Considerations

- Each court has determined how they manage virtual appearances.
- The courts will send out part rules with standards as well as appearance notifications well in advance of court appearances.
- In New York State, Microsoft Teams is the audio/video platform used for all virtual court appearances.

What is Microsoft Teams?

Microsoft Teams

- Microsoft Teams is an easy-to-use audio/video communication and collaboration platform the Courts use that currently allows up to 250 people to participate in an online meeting.
- The courts have officially moved from Skype to Teams effective 11/25/20. Some older cases may continue in Skype, but these are minimal.





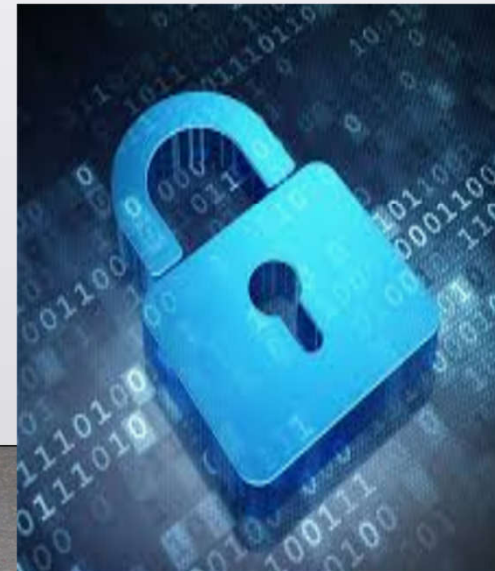
Why have the NYS Courts moved to Teams?

- Teams offers the same functionality as Skype for Business with a range of new and improved features
- Microsoft plans to retire Skype for Business 7/31/21
- Teams offers a more reliable experience for online meetings
- Screen sharing options including the ability to share your desktop and include system audio seamlessly
- Improved video quality over Skype
- Teams includes a Breakout Room feature to allow for private communications without having to disconnect from a virtual appearance

Teams Security Benefits

Teams is secure and appropriate to use for confidential information & proceedings, unlike other commercial videoconferencing products:

- Teams has many security controls not present in most videoconferencing products
- Teams is encrypted end-to-end
- UCS Teams runs in the Microsoft Government cloud
- Entirely hosted on servers in the U.S.
- Teams is Fedramp certified
- Teams is HIPAA compliant



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**Do I need to have a
Microsoft Teams account
to participate?**

- You do NOT need your own Teams license or sign-in to participate
- Teams is available for free for multiple device types and platforms



What is needed to participate?



- A computer with Internet access and a webcam and/or a microphone (built-in or usb headset)

-or-

- Participants can also use a smartphone to connect to the internet link or via App

-or-

- Participants can call in to a phone number provided for all appearances
- Toll-free numbers are also provided for those with a land line so that long-distance expenses are not incurred

What if I am
using an iPad or
other Apple
device?

Download the free MS
Teams app when
prompted from the
meeting link





Teams Hardware Requirements

<https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoftteams/hardware-requirements-for-the-teams-app>

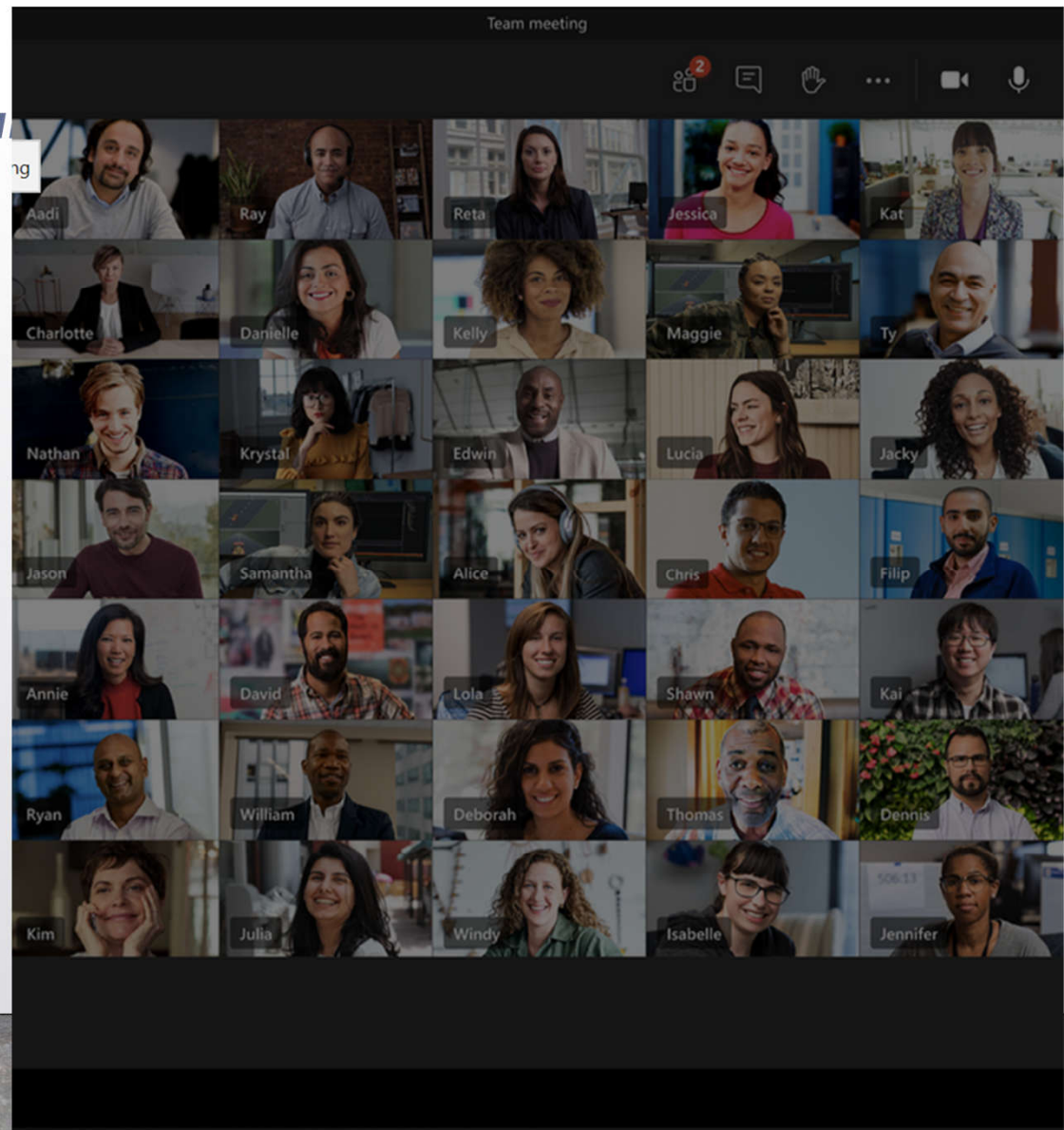
MS Teams - Key Virtual Hearing Platform Capability Considerations

Recommendations by the NCSC



Feature	Teams	Feature	Teams
Participant maximum	300	Recording function – local and cloud storage	✓
Video and Audio participation	✓	Automated transcripts	Live Transcriptions for meetings are coming soon.
Telephone access	✓		
On-demand and scheduled hearings	✓		
Private meeting codes or links to join	✓		
Limits on hearing length	Teams meetings have a 24hr limit but can be recurring and are available for 60 days.	Interoperability (Mac, Windows, iOS, Android)	✓
Waiting room feature	✓	Customization – URL, branding, etc.	
Private conference room feature	✓	End-to-end encryption	✓
In-meeting host controls (e.g. mute, turn off video, etc.)	✓	Authentication	✓ (Available but not required) Lobby feature for outside participants for security and manageability.
Screen sharing and file transfer	✓	Administrative reporting dashboard	Access reporting available through Microsoft
Chat feature (group and person-to-person)	✓ (Known concerns with recurring meetings, as the chat persists)	Internal and external user friendliness	✓
Integrated interpreter function	Available for internal users currently.	Live chat and phone support	UCS provides Teams testing on request
Virtual or blurred background	✓		
Integrated remote streaming (e.g. YouTube, Facebook)	Not currently integrated in Teams, but coming in the future.		

- Teams allows for as many as 49 video feeds per meeting.
- The screen will default to 9 “windows” unless 10 or more participants have their video camera activated.





Access to Justice Considerations

What if a litigant doesn't have a computer or smartphone with Internet access?

The UCS now provides a call-in number associated with each court appearance for those who are able to participate by phone. This number should always be included when notices are sent with virtual appearance info.

What if a litigant doesn't have a safe, quiet place to participate in a court appearance?

OR

What if a litigant doesn't have a phone?

Most courthouses now have dedicated "anterooms" with a computer setup to connect to Teams and allow those who have no other option to still participate in a virtual appearance. This is still virtual – not live before the judge in the courthouse. Contact the court to request this if required, and the option is generally mentioned on the appearance notice.


We have extended public wi-fi in every courthouse during COVID

The court system is also partnering with community-based organizations to provide access to a computer with Internet access to participate virtually. Examples include houses of worship, libraries, community organizations.



How are participants notified of a Virtual Appearance?

Invites will be mailed or e-mailed by Court staff



When are Teams Invites sent?


This may vary. Court staff are scheduling virtual appearances and depending on their process will send an e-mail or a mailed notice.

For emergency matters the email may be sent the day of or shortly before the appearance.

The Court will always be the initiator of these invites.

How do I join a Meeting?

Click on the link in
e-mail or
Call one of the phone numbers



Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer or mobile app

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Or call in (audio only)

[+1 347-378-4143](#)

<#> United States, New York City

[\(833\) 262-7886](#)

<#> United States (Toll-free)

Phone Conference ID.

<#>

Options when Teams Meeting Link is Clicked

**How do you want to join
your Teams meeting?**



Download the Windows app

Use the desktop app for the best experience.



Continue on this browser

No download or installation required.



Open your Teams app

Already have it? Go right to your meeting.



For full Audio/Video Experience,
Join a Teams meeting using:

DESKTOP
APP*

WEB
LINK

MOBILE
APP

Using the Full Teams Client



**How do you want to join
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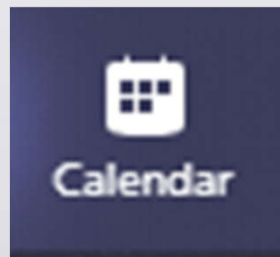


Open your Teams app

Already have it? Go right to your meeting.

Join a scheduled meeting from the Full Teams Client

- Open Microsoft Teams on your computer
- Click on your calendar on the left-hand side of the screen
- Locate the meeting in your calendar and click on the meeting, then click Join



Roles in a Teams meeting

Capability	Organizer	Presenter	Attendee
Speak and share video	✓	✓	✓
Participate in meeting chat	✓	✓	✓
Share content	✓	✓	
Privately view a PowerPoint file shared by someone else	✓	✓	✓
Take control of someone else's PowerPoint presentation	✓	✓	
Mute other participants	✓	✓	
Remove participants	✓	✓	
Admit people from the lobby	✓	✓	
Change the roles of other participants	✓	✓	
Start or stop recording	✓	✓	

Teams chat, file, visible to anyone



Lobby Feature

**Why do I see
“Someone
in the
meeting
should let
you in soon”**

Many of the Teams meetings are set up with the “lobby” feature. In a virtual court hearing, you would wait in the “lobby” until the judge is ready to hear your case. A clerk will add you to the virtual appearance when the court is ready to begin.

Options When Joining the Meeting

Choose your video and audio options

Your camera is turned off

☒ Turn camera on and off

Background filters

Computer audio ☒

Jabra SPEAK 410 USB

☒ Mute and unmute microphone, control volume

Phone audio ☐

Room audio ☐

Don't use audio ☐

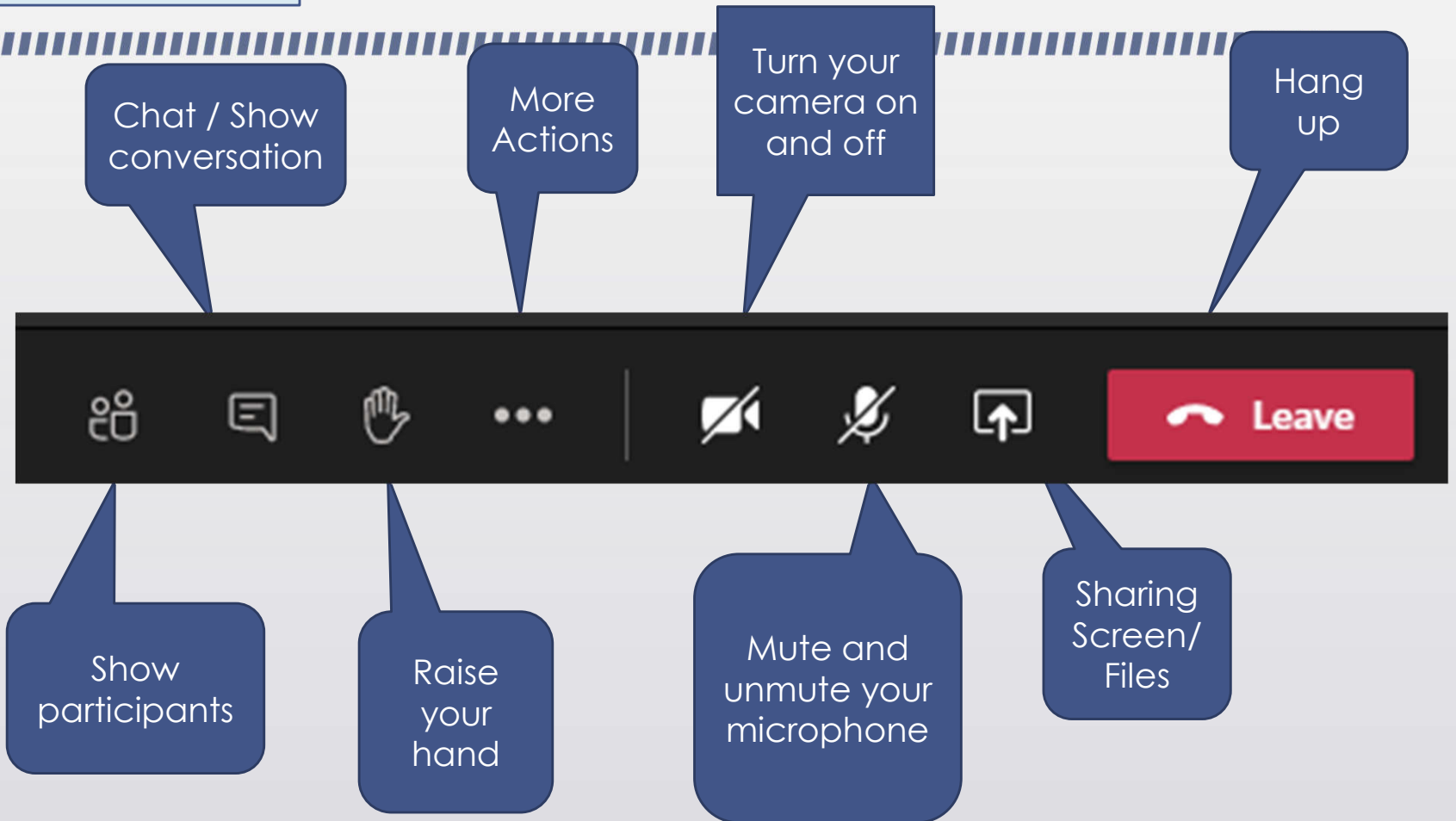
Select to use computer's speakers for sound

Cancel

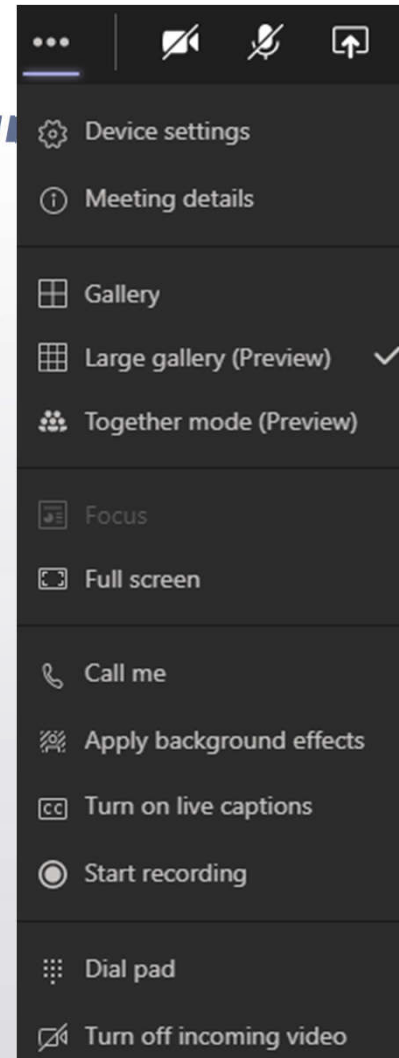
Join now

Join the meeting

Teams Control Bar



... more actions
available on the full
Windows Client



Using the Teams Browser Link



**How do you want to join
your Teams meeting?**



Download the Windows app

Use the desktop app for the best experience.




Continue on this browser

No download or installation required.










Open your Teams app

Already have it? Go right to your meeting.

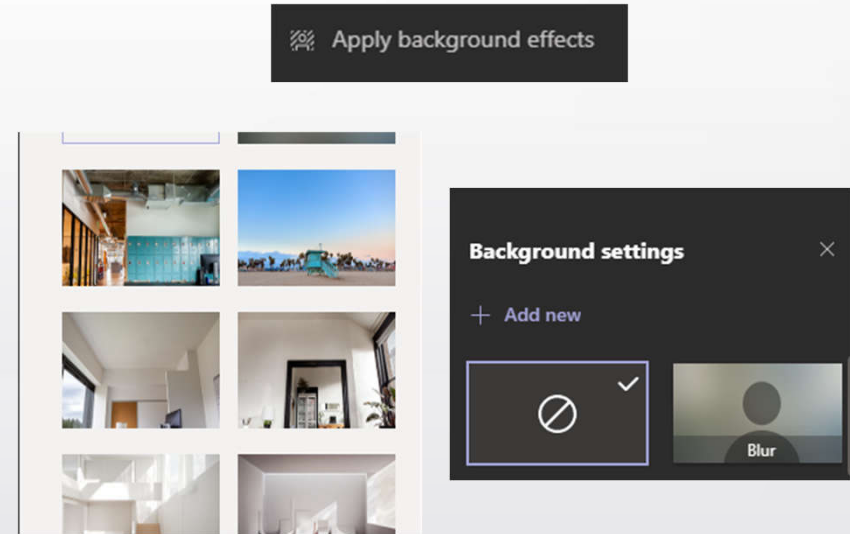


... more actions
available on the
Browser-based
connection

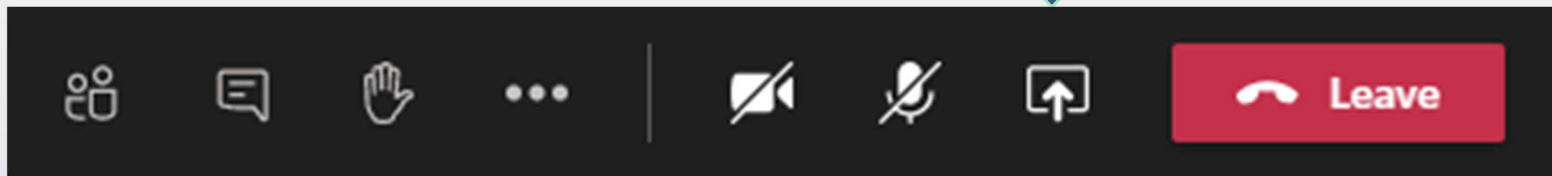
-  Show device settings
-  Show meeting notes
-  Show meeting details
-  Enter full screen
-  Keypad
-  Start recording
-  Turn off incoming video

Adding a Professional Background

- from ... more actions on control bar
- Apply background effects
- Select no background, blur, stock picture or add new from a picture saved on your local device
- Consider your background tone - distractions, seriousness
- NOTE: Changing background is not available in the web-based client



Presenting in Teams



Share Content Including:
Files/Documents
Video
Audio

Sharing Options

- Individual File/Application (Window)
- Full Screen (Desktop)
- PowerPoint Presentation
- If file has sound, indicate “Include computer sound”



☐ Include computer sound

Desktop

Window

PowerPoint

Browse



Breakout rooms

Breakout Room Functionality

- The desktop (PC/Mac), web, and mobile (iOS/Android) clients all support breakout rooms.
- The organizer of the meeting runs the breakout rooms, and these must be managed with a desktop client.
- The organizer is always a court employee, typically a court clerk.
- The attendees of the meetings can be any client, but they must be a client.
- Dial-in users can't be brought into a breakout room today.



Alternate Options to Breakout Rooms


Until the courts begin using the “Breakout Room” feature in Teams, participants may have a private conversation in two ways:

- The parties who want to have a private conversation will mute their microphones on the Teams meeting, then use their phones for their private call. When it is over, the parties will rejoin the main meeting by unmuting themselves.
- The court might create a separate Teams call for the parties who wish to have a private conversation. The parties will join the new call via an URL created by the court (which will put the original Teams call on hold). Again, when the private call is over, the parties can rejoin the main meeting

Recording

- Each court has standard recording mechanism for the official record:
 - Court Reporters
 - or-
 - Digital
- Using Teams to record is not considered an official record.
- Please pay attention to the recording indicator to make sure no participants are recording via Teams.
- Meeting “Attendees” cannot record

Meeting with Christine Sisario

 00:26



 **You're recording** You are recording this meeting. Be sure to let everyone know that they are being recorded. [Privacy policy](#)

Dismiss

Recording



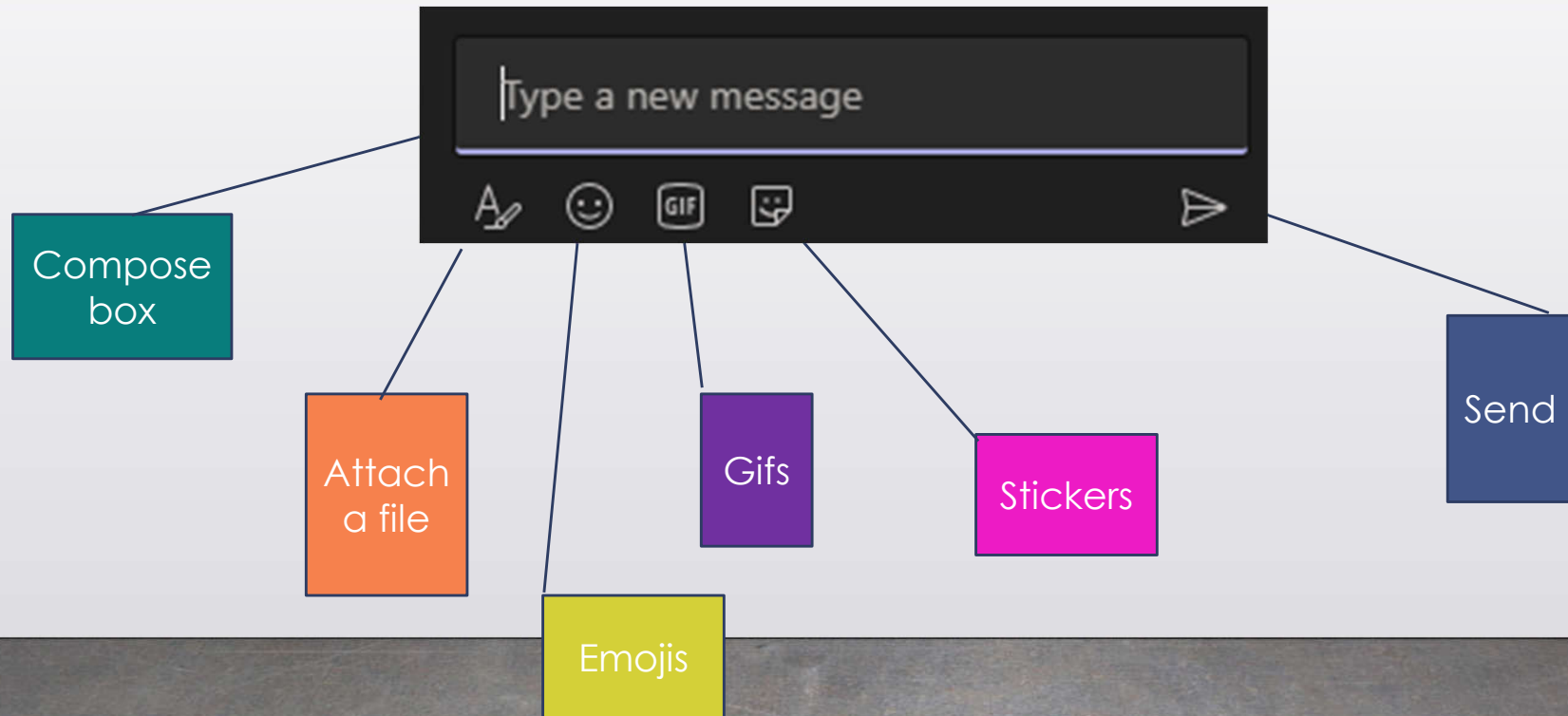
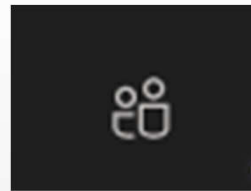
- Per recently passed legislation, when there is a felony preliminary hearing and a witness is testifying virtually, the witness portion of the proceeding must be recorded in Teams and provided to all attorneys on the case through the Electronic Document Delivery System (EDDS)



A reminder
that recording
is prohibited
by court rule

Recording,
broadcasting or
streaming of the
proceedings is not
permitted

Meeting Chat





Chat is persistent

- Meeting chat in Teams is persistent and accessible by all users who log into a Teams meetings even after they have left the meeting.
- Currently, saved recordings appear in the Chat.

The Court will not be using Teams as a method for filing documents

- Please continue to use the filing methods in place for delivering papers to the Court.
- This includes NYSCEF or the Electronic Document Delivery System (EDDS)

NYSCEF - New York State Courts Electronic Filing

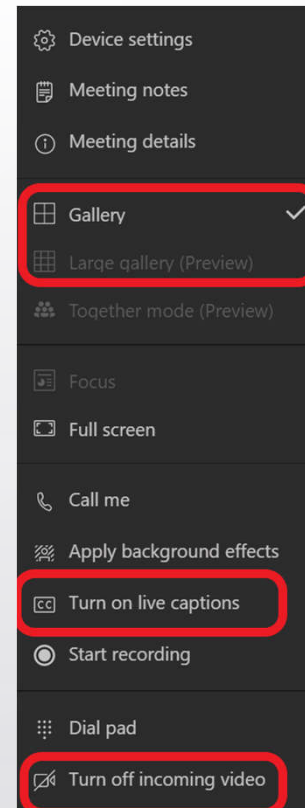
Electronic Document Delivery System (EDDS)

The UCS has made available a system of secure document transmission by court users to judges, clerks of court, and other UCS offices around the State. This system, known as the Electronic Document Delivery System (EDDS), may also be used for filing of documents **in pending cases** in courts where NYSCEF is not available. EDDS may be used by attorneys, unrepresented persons, and other court users. For more information on this system, view the [EDDS Notice](#) and the [EDDS FAQs](#).

EDDS should NOT be used for the filing of emergency applications except in a Family Court that has been authorized to receive such applications via EDDS, or in a Court where the Judge directs the use of EDDS for that purpose. For information on filing such applications please contact the court directly.

Additional Helpful Teams Features in “... More Actions” menu

- Gallery view (9 windows) vs Large Gallery view (49 windows)
- Live Captioning
 - Only available on the full client
 - Not the web or telephone
- Turn off Incoming Video
 - If network performance is a concern





Assistance and Support

Virtual Appearance Guide

Online Portal for the Public

<https://nycourts.gov/appear>

<https://portal.nycourts.gov>

Online Portal for the Public, Attorneys, Staff: Virtual Court Appearances



The screenshot displays the homepage of the New York State Unified Court System's online portal. At the top, a navigation bar includes the court system's logo, the text "New York State Unified Court System", and links for "Virtual Court Appearances", "Public Users", a search icon, and a "Sign in" button. Below this is an orange banner with the text "Coronavirus and the New York State Courts". The main header features a photograph of the Court of Appeals building with the word "Welcome" overlaid. The page is divided into three primary sections, each with an icon and a blue button:

- Virtual Court Resource Center** (Icon: Court building):
Judicial and Non-Judicial Employees
**Login with @nycourts.gov email account*
- Virtual Court Appearances** (Icon: Computer monitor):
How to Virtually Appear in Court
- Public Users** (Icon: Network of people):
Attorneys, Litigants, Agencies
EDDS, Secure Email, and more

New York State Virtual Court Appearance Audio/Video Test Request

IMPORTANT:

1. If you have not yet done so, visit <https://nycourts.gov/appear> to learn what you need to do to appear virtually.
2. If you have questions on your case or a court's procedure, please contact that court directly. The testing staff members do not have any information on your court proceeding nor a specific court's procedure.

Please enter the information below to request a Microsoft Teams audio/video test prior to your New York State Virtual Court Appearance.

Name *

Title	First	Middle	Last	Suffix
-------	-------	--------	------	--------

Email Address *

The hours of operation for this testing service are Monday through Friday, except court holidays, 9:30am until 11:30am.

Preferred Audio/Video Test Date *

Type of Device *

Submit

Schedule
a Test
Meeting



The Future

- The court system fully expects to continue virtual appearances even beyond COVID
- Exact rules and scenarios are not yet finalized
- Commission to Reimagine the Future of NY's Courts is addressing much of the future state for virtual and making recommendations
- The court system continues to think about further options to address the digital divide
- A pilot virtual jury project will be starting in the 7th JD soon, which involves loaning out equipment to potential jurors