



Housing Practice Tip (03.28.2022)

Volunteering for a Remote Housing Clinic

Appearing over Zoom as a volunteer at a housing court clinic is straightforward. If you are new to Zoom or new to appearing in court over Zoom, below is a breakdown of what you need to know

In advance of your volunteering date, you will receive:

- Zoom meeting information for the date and time of the calendar.
- A copy of the Court calendar listing the cases:
 - Ramsey and Anoka County calendar: available by 3pm the day before the calendar.
 - Hennepin County's calendar: available two days prior to the calendar.
- Instructions on how to appear in court remotely (for new volunteers).
- The name and email address of VLN's clinic assistant who will be at the calendar with you.
 - If you need anything during the clinic, you should email the clinic assistant.
 - The Zoom chat function is a part of the court record, so it is not the best way to connect with anyone other than court staff.
- If you want to look at court documents for the cases on the calendar prior to the court clinic:
 - Go to *Access Court Records* on the Minnesota Judicial Branch Website and find the link for Minnesota Court Records Online (MCRO) <https://www.mncourts.gov/access-case-records.aspx>
 - You can search for cases and all public court documents by case number or party name.

How a Zoom Clinic works:

1. There will be many different groups of people attend the initial appearance hearing over zoom, which may include:
 - a. Court staff (1 to 2 clerks, the judicial officer, and a court reporter).
 - b. VLN's clinic assistant.
 - c. Other service providers, such as mediators and financial services staff.
 - d. Parties and their lawyers.
 - e. Legal aid lawyers and other volunteer lawyers.
2. Zoom set-up:
 - a. Main waiting room.
 - b. Break out rooms.
 - c. Courtroom.

3. Time:
 - a. Ramsey calendars on Tuesday and Thursdays starting at 8:15 am and 1:15 pm.
 - b. Hennepin begins at 9:00 am for morning calendars and 1:30 pm for afternoon calendars.
 - c. Anoka begins at 8:30 am (Monday and Wednesday) and 1:00 pm on Mondays.
4. Process:
 - a. Court staff make announcements about Zoom procedures and services available, clients are identified for free legal services.
 - b. Potential clients complete intake with VLN's clinic assistant. Clinic assistant alerts the volunteer what level of services the client qualifies for: full representation or limited representation/advice only (see more details below).
 - c. Volunteer attorney meets with client to provide services.
5. Options for legal services provided to clients:
 - a. Advice only.
 - b. Limited Representation (clients need only qualify for advice services to receive limited services).
 - c. Speak with opposing counsel.
 - d. Negotiate settlement
 - e. Brief court appearance:
 - i. Note to the court that you are appearing on behalf of the client only for the day. The clerks generally know to not make you an attorney of record in the court file when you say this.
 - ii. If you make a court appearance, we require a Representation Agreement with the client.
 - iii. Your description of services on the Representation Agreement will specify the limited services.
 - f. Full Representation:
 - i. If Volunteer Attorney plans to provide full representation to client:
 1. VLN clinic assistant will help with representation agreement using an e-signature service (HelloSign).
 2. May appear in Court.
 - ii. If the client is eligible for full representation, but Volunteer Attorney serving the clinic cannot provide full representation:
 1. Advise client that will try to find volunteer to take case, but do not promise.
 2. Notify VLN intake staff and VLN will attempt placement of the case with a full rep volunteer attorney after the hearing.
 3. Take good notes as to why a case is recommended for full representation. Include this information in your case closing form.
6. If you want to negotiate with the opposing party:
 - a. Let the clinic assistant know you want to speak with opposing party/attorney. The clinic assistant can help identify the opposing party if needed.
 - b. Meet with Opposing Party in a breakout room.

- c. Settlement Agreements:
 - i. Courts are used to settlement agreements being read into the record by one side.
 - ii. In Ramsey has a specific form for settlement agreements that can be emailed to court prior to appearance.
 - iii. In Anoka, settlement agreements can be read into the record.
 - iv. In Hennepin, settlement agreements can be read into the record or emailed to the court.
7. If you plan to appear in Court, let Court staff know.
8. If you have questions, need help, or need to communicate with VLN while in clinic:
 - a. VLN clinic assistant available on Zoom.
 - b. VLN staff attorney available during the clinic time.
9. What if?
 - a. Zoom is not working, or you are having other technical issues with logging in:
 - i. Email VLN's clinic assistant to let them know you are having technical difficulties.
 - ii. You can call into the zoom hearing.
 - iii. Email the VLN clinic assistant or VLN staff to get the call-in information for Zoom court.
 - b. There are too many clients that need help:
 - i. VLN Staff Attorney is the backup attorney to join Zoom court provide advice.
 - ii. Let clinic assistance know you think another attorney is needed if available to come to the clinic.
 - iii. Can request a continuance from the court for clients that cannot be seen during calendar.
 - c. You are unable to appear for your scheduled shift:
 - i. Email the VLN clinic assistant or VLN staff you have been in contact with for the court shift.

Helpful Information on how to provide services remotely:

Join a Zoom Meeting

- [How to Join a Zoom Meeting from Your Computer](#)
- [How to Join a Zoom Meeting by Phone](#)

Zoom on a Mobile Device

- [Zoom on a Mobile Device](#)

Zoom Breakout Rooms

- [Zoom Breakout Rooms for Participants](#)