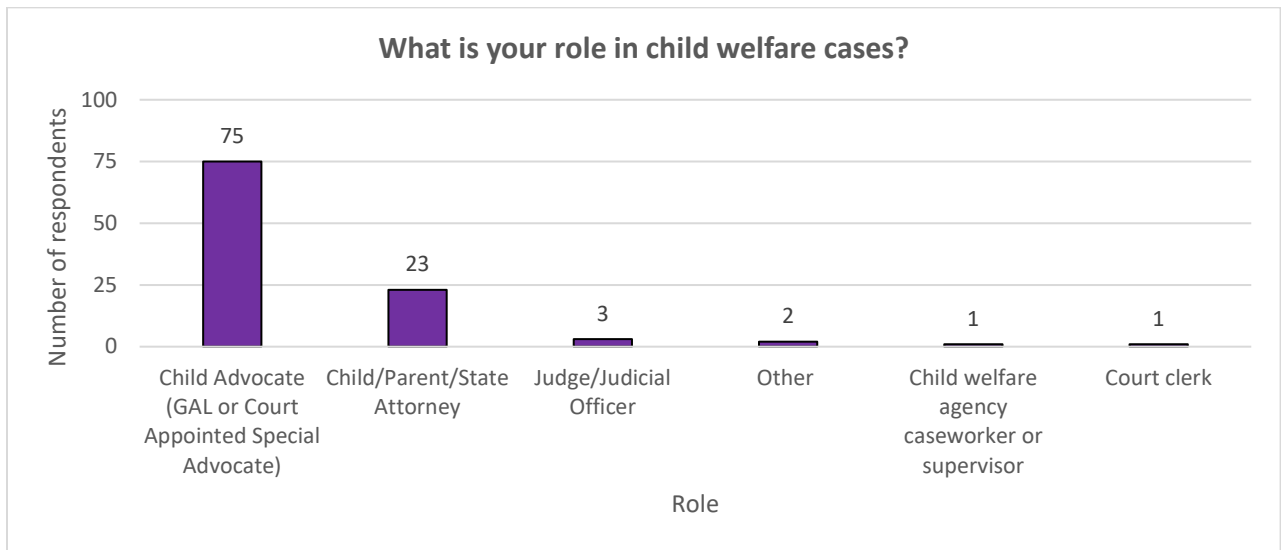


2021 Oregon Remote Hearing Responses

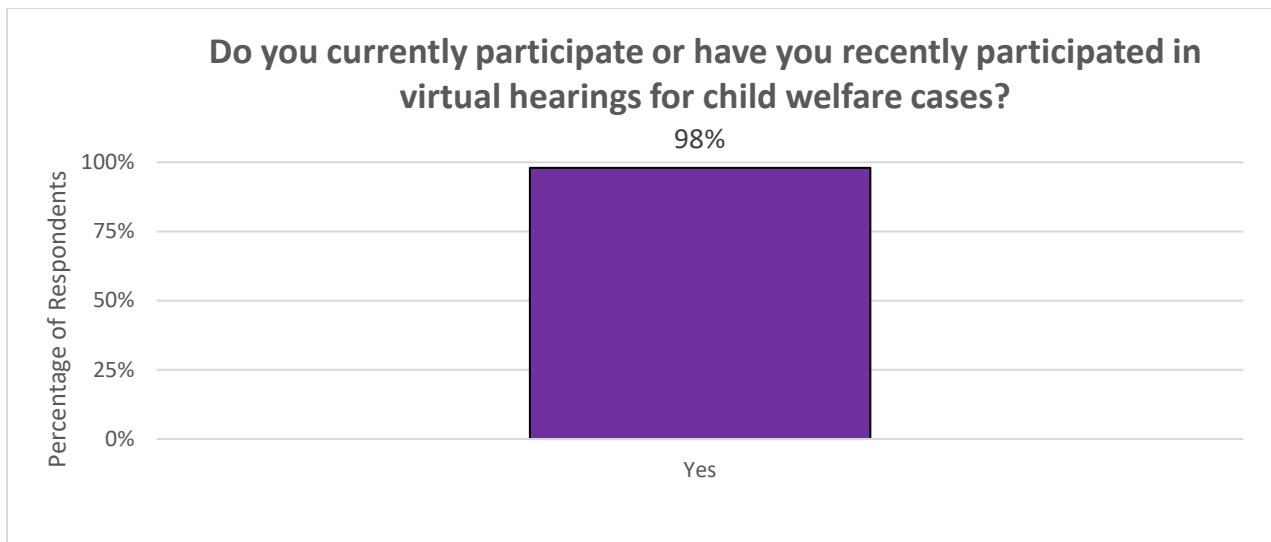
Oregon agreed to participate in a remote hearings study (December 2020 – March 2021). The following illustrates the descriptive information about the findings and articulates themes from the open ended questions.

The purpose of the study was to conduct research in an effort to better understand virtual/remote hearing practices in child welfare cases, including how parent's respond to the hearing process.

There were 105 participants who completed the survey in Oregon.

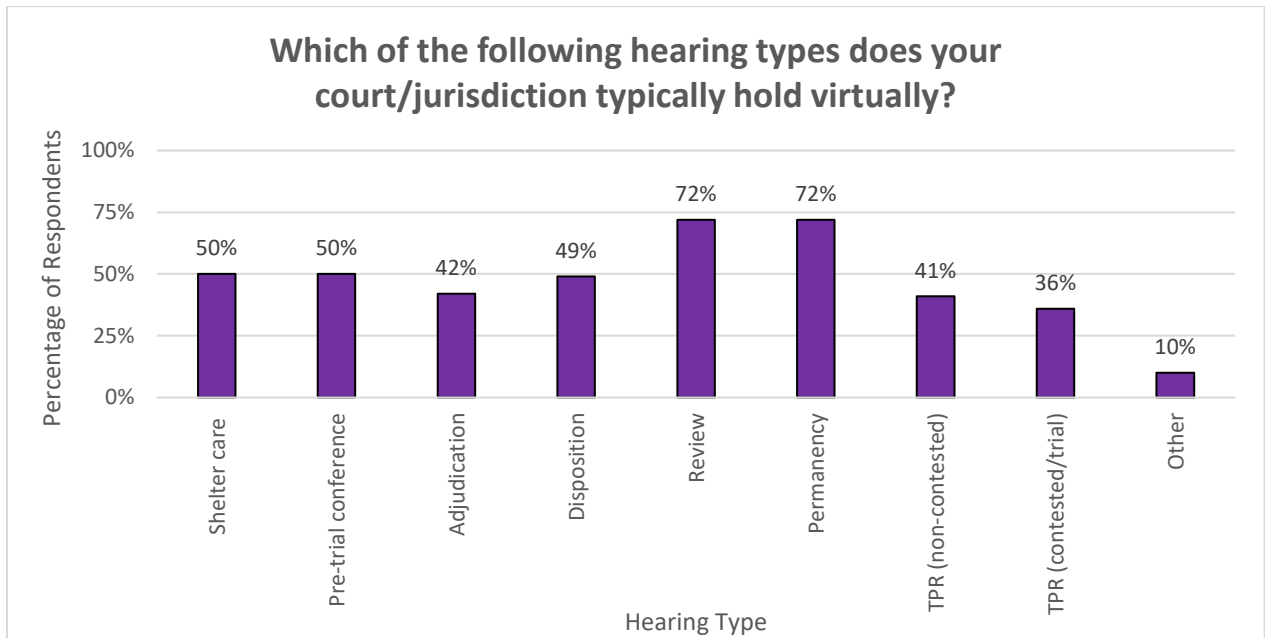


The other category includes a CASA supervisor/CASA staff member and a Parent-Child Representative Program Case Manager.



If you have an administrative role in scheduling, setting up, or managing the virtual court hearings, what do you consider your most common challenges? (open ended responses)

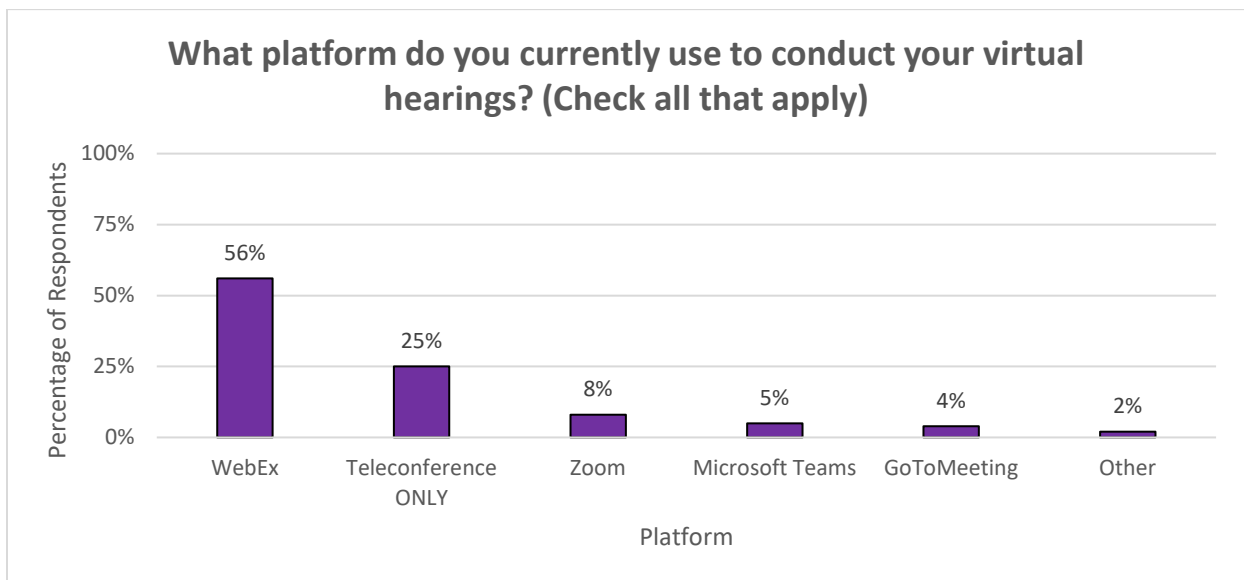
1. Getting the WebEx or virtual links to clients well in advance of the hearing and or getting them to witnesses - we often get it late in the day the night before - also it is hard to manage the timing of witnesses as well (because they are not in the hall but have to log on etc.)
2. Getting timely information from the court on how and when to appear remotely (i.e. the correct link and phone numbers/access codes in advance of the hearing date.)
3. Helping the client to have access to the necessary technology.
4. Keeping up with all of phone numbers and call in information.
5. Last minute changes not being communicated in a timely manner.
6. Managing the volume of participants involved for each case.



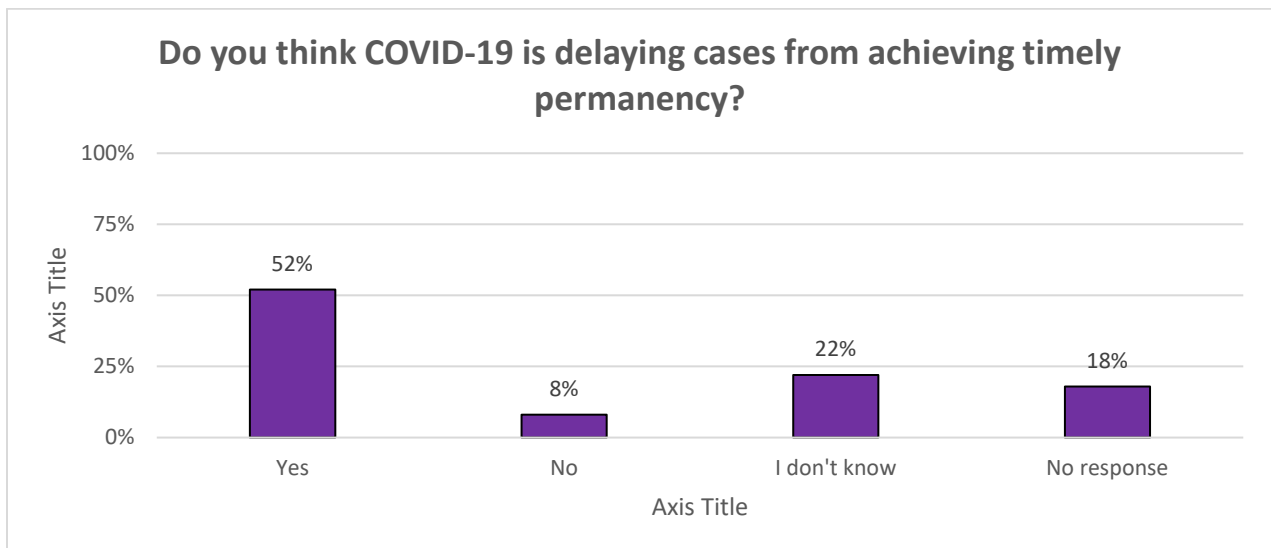
The other category was a write in response and included:

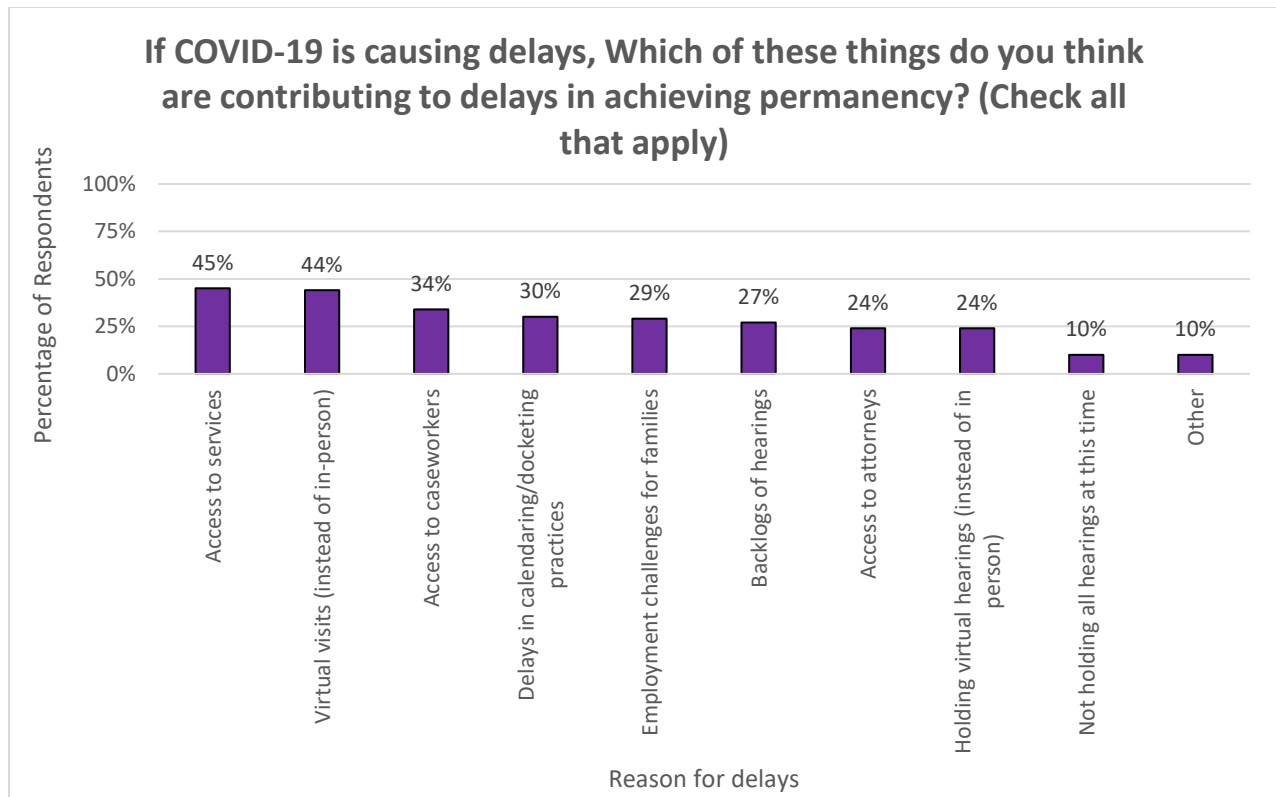
1. All dependency hearings are currently virtual and have been since March/April 2020.
2. All hearings are conducted by phone.
3. CRB Hearings.
4. Currently there is only 1 judge in the county that routinely does web-ex hearings, other are conducted by the telephone.

5. *Emergency hearings to address return or dismissal.*
6. *Guardianship*
7. *I know for certain that permanency and review hearings are remote right now, but I think that all hearings are remote right now.*
8. *I'm not sure of termination hearings.*
9. *Not sure of TPR's.*
10. *These are all I am aware of and have participated in.*



The other responses were phone hearings (audio only) through WebEx and ATT conference call.

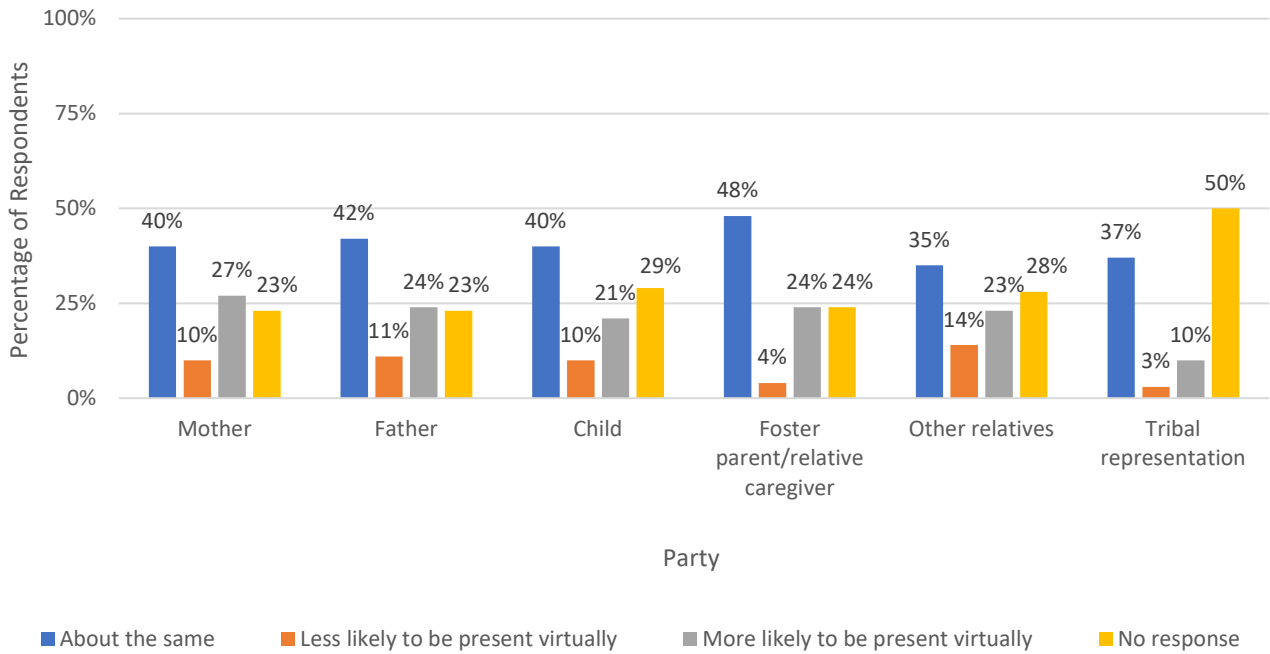




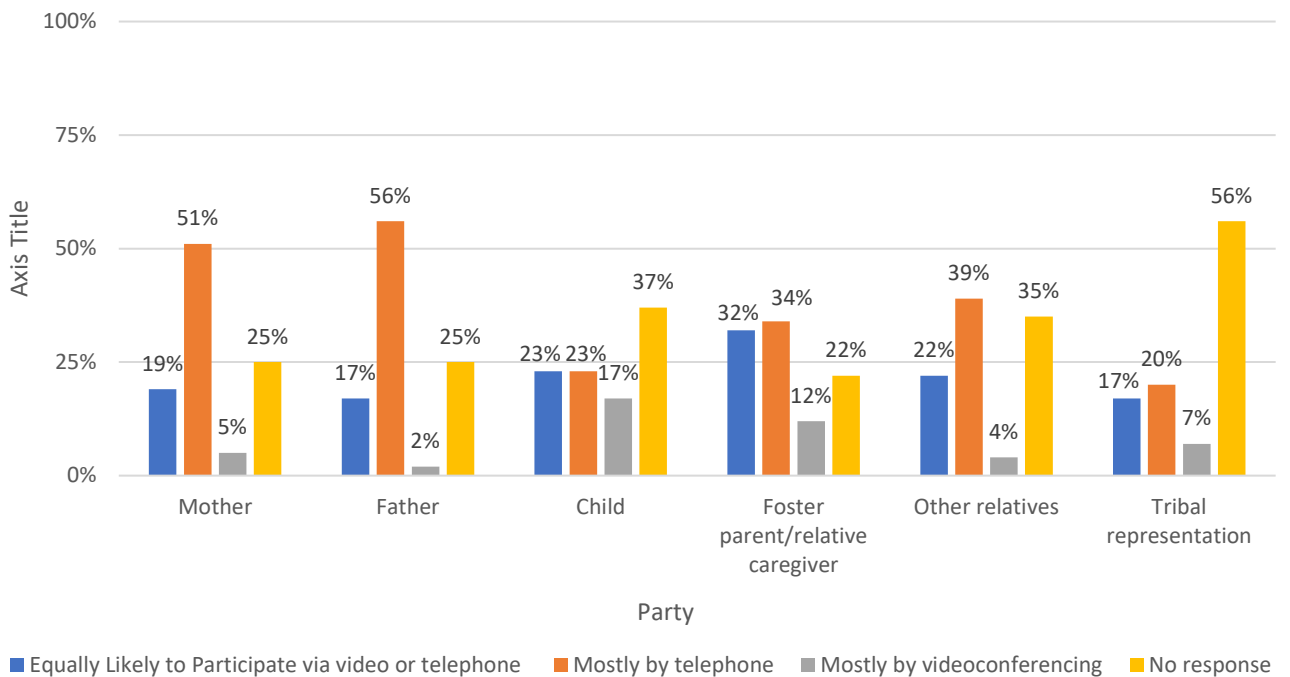
The other category includes the following responses:

1. *Backlog of criminal cases can affect the timing on dependency cases.*
2. *Clients are depressed and hopeless.*
3. *Court inflexible.*
4. *DHS - Impact of COVID on DHS workers.*
5. *I also just have clients who are sick, and that has been challenging.*
6. *Lack of in person services making parental or child process difficult.*
7. *Juvenile Drug Court*
8. *Limitation/reduction in visitation opportunities for advocates with their youth.*
9. *Majority of hearings are by telephone only.*
10. *Not holding as many hearings to try and lighten the backlog from closures early on in the pandemic.*
11. *Parents who are experiencing confusion and lack of access due to lack of technical means (devices and data /minutes) to communicate with lawyers, to communicate with service providers, and participate in remote visits, services and hearings.*

Thinking about the following hearing participants, how would you rate their presence at virtual hearings in comparison to in person hearings?



How are the following parties MOST likely to participate in virtual hearings?



What percentage of parents would you say have access issues? That is, they do not have access to technology (e.g., WIFI, computers) to participate by video in a hearing? (open ended responses)

- We only have phone hearings, so I can't comment on computer or WIFI access.
- Very high. Smart phones are common.
- Unknown
- Not sure/None (3 responses)
- My current case has no parents.
- I know some do, but they are calling in. I think court appearance had gone up with having the ability to appear from anywhere. This has eliminated the travel issues and the amount of time people have to spend away from work.
- I have not encountered any without access.
- I have no idea.
- Hard to say; DHS provides them with phones, but sometimes they are limited as to time, cell service, etc.
- For my cases - 100 percent
- few
- Even those with phones have connectivity issues at times. Some do not have computers. WIFI access is an issue.
- At least 50 percent of my clients cannot use Zoom, WebEx or other video conferencing technologies.
- As a CASA in this case both parents participate fully.
- 95%
- 85% or more
- 85%
- 80% (3 responses)
- 75-80% at least. It is a very common issue.
- 75%+
- 75% have the devices but insufficient data to allow video participation

- 75% (4 responses)
- 60% (2 responses)
- 50% (12 responses)
- 45%
- 33%
- 30%
- 25%??? (3 responses)
- 20% (3 responses)
- 20 % as long as DHS is able to assist when needed.
- 10%
- 5-10%
- 5%
- 0% (3 responses)

Have you had any successes with engaging parents in the virtual hearing process? If so, please describe what you did that you felt was successful. (open-ended response)

- As a CASA in this particular case I have not met either d/t Covid restrictions. I cannot view visitation behind a window as only DHS person is doing that. We are not able to social distance in that space. After 6 months in Foster care still no jurisdiction. I do home visits with the children who are in care with family members and that helps me immensely.
- Clients have difficulty engaging, but as a lawyer - everyone also turns off their screen so the court cannot judge the non-witnesses' parents' reaction nor can I, I live in rural Oregon there are issues with WIFI access - but also issues with actual cell phone coverage.
- Connecting with them ahead of hearings and making sure they have the WebEx links and we have the correct number.
- Sending them reminders shortly before court, texting them if the hearing is running late.
- Court notices were revised to include information regarding remote appearance requirements and instructions.
- DHS and Attorneys have made efforts to set up times or locations for parents to meet and engage virtually by video rather than just phone. This is sometimes successful and sometimes not. As CASA, we generally

don't have much direct involvement in trying to help parents with the virtual hearing process.

- DHS has opened their conference rooms to assist in parents showing up to hearings.
- DHS is providing parents with phones for hearings and showing them how to access WebEx.
- Early trouble shooting regard technology issues. Virtual hearings have eliminated the transportation issues, but sometimes they do not have sufficient WIFI or phone/computer to use. I have helped them locate free WIFI and advocated for technology that they could use.
- Engaged parents tend to appear however they can. Disengaged parents still fail to appear.
- Ensuring parents had phones and minutes or access to our office for hearings. Ensuring I check with clients and foster parents if I represent the child to ensure the e-invites made it to them. Text with clients in order to have private communications during hearings.
- I am not able to engage with parents in the virtual process. If we were meeting in person, I would be able to do so.
- I don't have direct contact with the parents. I have provided advice to Child Welfare on a case-by-case basis to help improve ability for parent to engage in services and court, but the contact with the parents was made by Child Welfare.
- I have shared with them the teleconferencing call in codes when they have not received it from the attorney or case worker.
- I have used communication with them to determine any obstacles or barriers and then worked to remove those (if they live rurally with little bandwidth then getting them to appear in their cars down the road, or at the CPS offices or getting CPS to get them a smartphone etc.
- I purchased equipment for them. DHS has not been helpful in the counties where I work.
- In both of my cases, parents are eager to participate.
- Less success.
- Most parents are able to at least call in, but it's rarer that they have the equipment for video. On occasion, our case manager has been able to help get parents a working phone in order to call in.
- Most parents are participating via phone. As stated earlier, video is not the norm in our county. Powers at be feel it is an equity issue.
- Mostly it's been trying to explain how to utilize their phone via email to access the hearing. I wouldn't say any step has felt particularly successful.
- Mostly. I make sure the parent has WebEx downloaded, typically we try to do a test run before court. The Court makes sure to send a direct invite. WIFI and tech access is the most difficult piece.

- N/A (4 responses)
- No (7 responses)
- No real issues getting them involved in the hearings; actually, probably more involvement since it is so much more convenient (no transportation issues, no need to stay away for fear of being arrested on a warrant, etc.)
- Offering a space with internet access
- Patience, having the court call them instead of waiting for them to call the court, having the lawyer call them and putting their phone on "speaker" so the Court can hear them.
- Phone hearings are almost impossible. the disembodied voice taking away your kids is unbearable for most parents.
- They have no idea what happened.
- Providing phone number for call-in well in advance of hearing. helps when court has set # for ALL hearings vs. having new # for each hearing that we get day of.
- Recently, our state has a program to support attorneys through case managers. These case managers have been able to go to where the parents are to address phone/technology issues. I text my clients during hearings so that I can continue to support them through the hearing and then follow up with a phone call at the end of the hearing.
- This is vital to my representation.
- Some parents have anxiety around the courtroom/being in a crowd/being in the spotlight so for them video is comfortable.
- Some parents participate and are well engaged in the hearings.
- The courts in our area that are not using a video format has some issues. The call-in system has issues with muting phones so background noise is not a problem. I like that the Judge can mute people when on the WebEx video format.
- Very limited, only when they are in custody or at a state-supported facility.
- Walking them through the program in advance.
- Yes, they are less afraid.
- Yes, via telephone only. The court connected the biological Mother and Father to the hearing.
- Yes, with in person case manager support at the parent's location.
- Yes. I spoke clearly.

- Yes. Simply seeing them and speaking directly to them via video. Less success when appearing by telephone only.

What percentage of children/youth would you say have access issues? That is, they do not have access to technology (e.g., WIFI, computers) to participate by video in a hearing? (open ended response)

- We are only by phone, so can't comment.
- Very much depends on the foster parent.
- Unknown. It is more likely they do not want to appear.
- The foster placements are generally good at providing access. Children placed in home not as much.
- The children have more access to technology than the parents. Most of the children have been given/loaned computer for school.
- N/A (2 responses)
- My kiddos have all been young, and not involved.
- My case is not having problems, as my child is in a treatment facility.
- Most would rely on their caretaker.
- Most of the children in Oregon are doing online school and have access. If they don't have a computer, they use the call-in feature and most of the older kids help the foster parents with the technology.
- Less than 5% (2 responses)
- less than 10%
- If the child is in a foster home instead of placed with parents, they do not usually have access issues.
- I think this is a small number as most people have at least a phone or laptop.
- I have no idea. Probably very few if the children are in foster care. If they are with their parents, there may be a few that would have access issues.
- I don't know. Our hearings are all by phone (with the exception of one judge who uses video, but she doesn't have a large juvenile caseload).
- I don't believe access is the barrier for children to attend hearings.
- Foster parents and treatment providers have worked hard to support youth with participation in hearings. However, I am uniformly unable to text/communicate with my child clients confidentially during hearings.

The kids who never wanted to participate in court hearings have not changed their minds as a result of virtual hearings.

- Few (2 responses)
- Children not in court
- Children in my cases are too young to participate.
- At this point, all Oregon families are attending online school so roughly 85% of school age access issues have been addressed. I would think that WIFI access could be addressed by DHS for children not of school age.
- 99%
- 80%
- 75%
- 50-75%. Older youth do not have access. Younger youth depend on whether or not their parent, foster parent, or guardian has access, and often do not appear because they are too young to be able to focus sitting in front of a computer or on the phone.
- 50% - less than parents b/c typically have access via foster parents.
- 50% (6 responses)
- 25% (2 responses)
- 20%. If kids are in foster care, they have access, if they are with their parents it is less likely.
- If they are a teen in independent living their access is not reliable.
- 20% (2 responses)
- 10% (4 responses)
- 0% (3 responses)

Have you had any successes with engaging youth in the virtual hearing process? If so, please describe what

that you felt was successful. (Open ended response)

- Yes. Keep the conversation light and age appropriate. Expect that for a younger child you may only get 10-15 minutes of conversation at most.
- Yes. Plan to do something fun like read a book or send riddles by mail ahead of time.
- Yes, if they are old enough and are participating by video. Less success when appearing by telephone only.
- Yes, but they do not like it.
- Those kids that want to participate are usually able to do it. I have talked with treatment providers in advance.

- They are far more comfortable with video than adults, especially with virtual school happening too.
- Some parents have anxiety around the courtroom/being in a crowd/being in the spotlight so for them video is more comfortable.
- Outside of court, yes. I have been having video visits and communications. Also, on the phone.
- Our juvenile courts are requiring WebEx so with delinquency clients it has been the most difficult. Families don't always have the best technology or WIFI.
- Only when the youth are on an in-home plan AND have attorneys or other providers who encourage attendance and participation.
- Only if child and provider given reminders and pre-instruction on process.
- Older youth are more technology savvy and generally have better access (smartphones, internet, etc.)
- Not applicable (3 responses)
- None, not able to meet with parties prior to hearing to discuss issues.
- No (6 responses)
- Most youth are either uninterested in participating but do so with sufficient notice. helps when court has set # for ALL hearings vs. having new # for each hearing that we get day of.
- Most are court ordered to attend so the juvenile department helps out.
- Let them participate with video off, but they can see others or use of telephone.
- less success
- Kids in foster care generally have adequate access to a reliable internet or telephone connection.
- I've had very few youths want to attend the virtual court hearing.
- In my cases, the children are too young.
- I only practice in dependency court, so no more difficulty in kids being on the calls if they want to be. Probably easier since it isn't the interruption in the child's day that leaving school and coming to court was.
- I do not have direct contact with the children.
- Hearings have not included youth.
- Generally, it is helpful if the foster parents or DHS are able to assist the youth. It is difficult given statewide Covid restrictions. Youth are very frequently not present at virtual hearings.

- Difficulty holding focus
- DHS is providing youth with phones and or tablets for hearings if needed.
- Communicating with foster parents and child welfare to ensure kids who want to be present have what they need to do so.
- Child able to attend with relative placement/foster parents who were also attending virtually.
- Attending when before attending in person would have been impossible because of distance
- Ask them to show me their pets, backyards, talk about non- court things.
- Allowing youth to appear from their own homes appears to have reduced some stress from participating in court and communicating with them prior to hearings to ensure I know what is important to them and get direction as to what they want me to present versus what they would like to present is also helpful.

**How is evidence, reports, or documentation shared when hearings are conducted virtually?
(open ended response)**

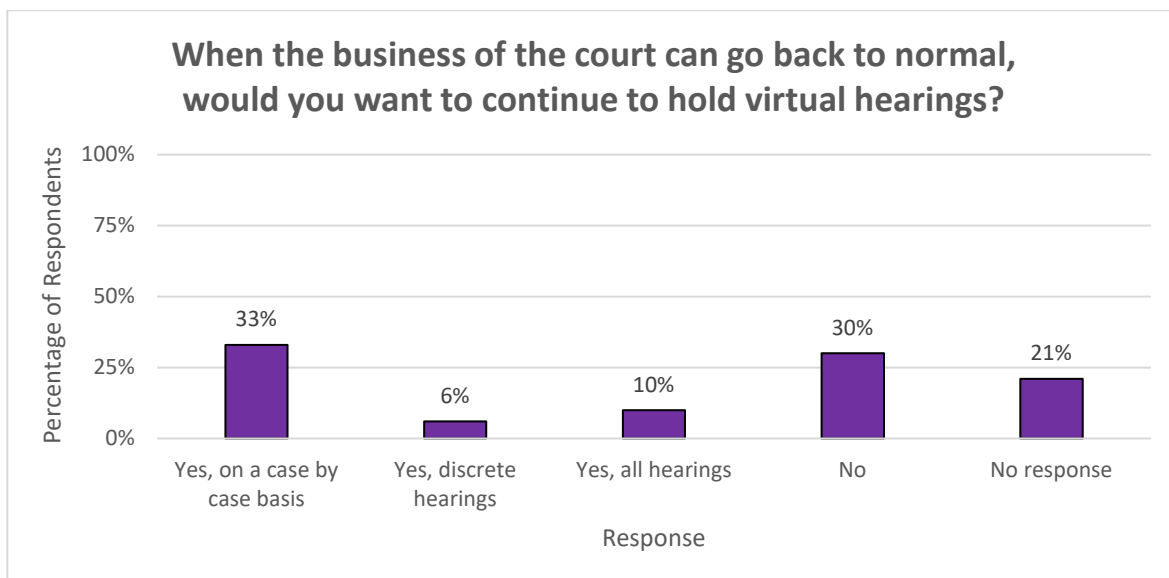
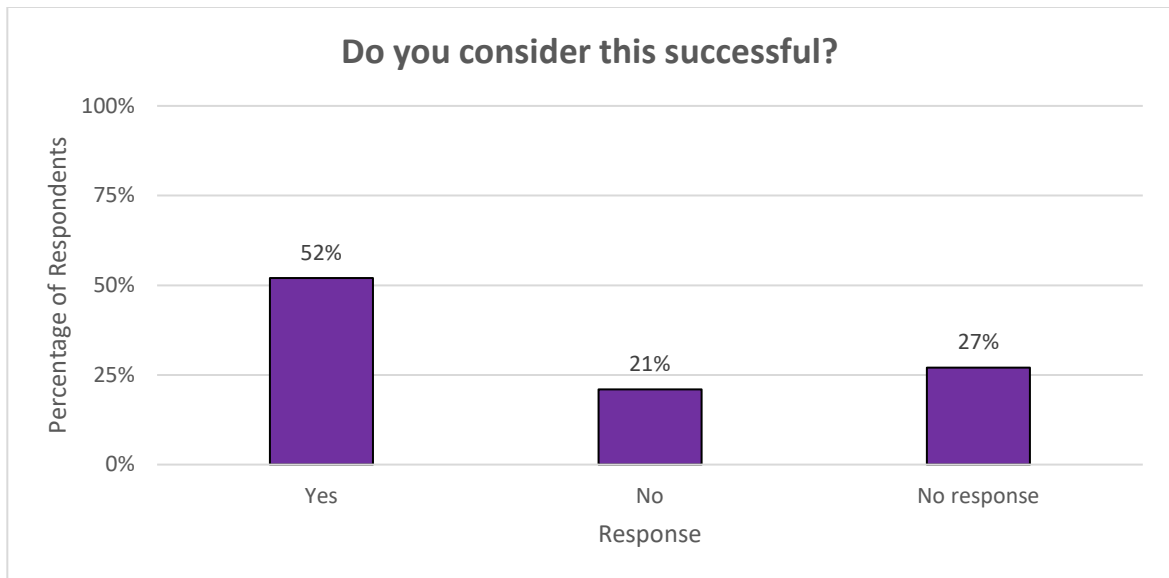
- We have to file the exhibits in advance or provide them to witnesses in advance.
- Via web sharing
- Via email prior to hearing
- via email (3 responses)
- via discovery
- Verbally (2 responses)
- Uploaded to the courts through Oregon eCourt Information. Copies are then sent electronically to all the associated parties prior to the hearings.
- Unsure
- through our online court filing system
- This has been a huge problem. Submission of exhibits at hearings has been a joint effort. Sometimes, we have been able to use email in the moment to get everyone the right information. Sometimes, we have to really plan ahead to get Exhibits submitted for trials in a timely way. I am not sure that anyone has been entirely successful with the technology issues for submission of exhibits.
- They are submitted to the parties ahead of time so that we can discuss any objections. Otherwise they

Are emailed to us and we take a break to review them if it is brand new.

- Submitted in advance, often day or day before hearing, which is fine for simple proceedings and uncontested matters, but not for more complex proceedings.
- Sent out to legal participants ahead of time
- Sent ahead of time via email.
- secure email
- Screen sharing from one of the parties.
- Same as usual, through Discovery
- Same
- Reports etc are turned into the court via computer and Judge reads! Everyone gets a copy of document via email or another program.
- Reports are sent out through Odyssey before the hearing. Exhibits are expected to be filed 14 days before a hearing. However, impeachment with documents and other issues remain.
- Reports are provided via discovery (online documents)
- reports are emailed in
- Referenced
- Pretrial
- Pre-filed with the court and served on other parties. Judges tend to have more patience if a party needs to new exhibit with other parties.
- People talking
- Our courts use efile and did so pre-pandemic too.
- Oregon requires proposed exhibits to be filed electronically and served on all parties
- Not well, if not sent out prior to the meeting
- not sure
- Most submitted in advance and available
- Most is shared between parties ahead of time and then sent to court so that atty can't still be remote

- Most distributed prior to the hearing date. Have not had any experience where a new piece of evidence has been presented in court the day of the hearing.
- Judge acknowledged court report. Asked if I have any other input.
- it is not
- In this case the CASA is included in all emails, so I don't feel like I am missing things in court.
- In Discovery ahead of time; shared screens at the time
- I have been able to upload exhibits but showing them to witnesses is difficult. Video evidence is impossible.
- Filed and served electronically prior to the hearing
- File & Serve or via email
- Exhibits are filed electronically with the court, and copies are emailed to attorneys. During a hearing, attorneys will sometimes screen share in order to publish exhibits.
- Everything is posted on e-court. If I have a document from a client that shows up too late to file through e-court in time I send all parties and the judge a copy via email. This can be done even after the hearing starts, so it hasn't been very different.
- Everything is filed and shared by email. Documents often have to be offered before the actual hearing, whereas in Court we can submit documents into evidence easily during court. Often there are issues and hearings have to be set over because not everyone has received the document. In normal circumstances, parties that didn't get to review the document can read a physical copy in the minutes before the hearing so the hearing does not need to be continued, but virtually we frequently have to continue important hearings so all parties can review documents.
- Everything has been provided a head of time through the electronic discovery process. If there are exhibits
- Emailed to parties and then uploaded into OECL as an exhibit
- Email/discovery
- email, file and serve
- Email, eFiling
- Email, eCourt website
- email, ecourt filings

- Email or not shared
- email and other websites utilized by state similar to dropbox
- Email (7 responses)
- Electronically, mostly
- Electronic judgments are sent to all parties, the same way when hearings took place in person pre-Covid
- Electronic
- E-filed with the court prior to a hearing and emailed to lawyers
- E-filed prior to hearing.
- Documents are sent in advance of the hearing.
- Distributed to the parties before the hearing.
- Discovery via email to stakeholders.
- Discovery by e-mail through our CASA office.
- Difficult
- By written report and verbal evidence
- By email prior to the hearing.
- by email
- by computer before hearing
- All evidence must be submitted 5 days in advance. However, sometimes you may not know that you have rebuttal evidence. We have been allowed to e-mail it to the court and others to share.



If you chose yes for only certain hearings or cases, please explain. (open ended responses)

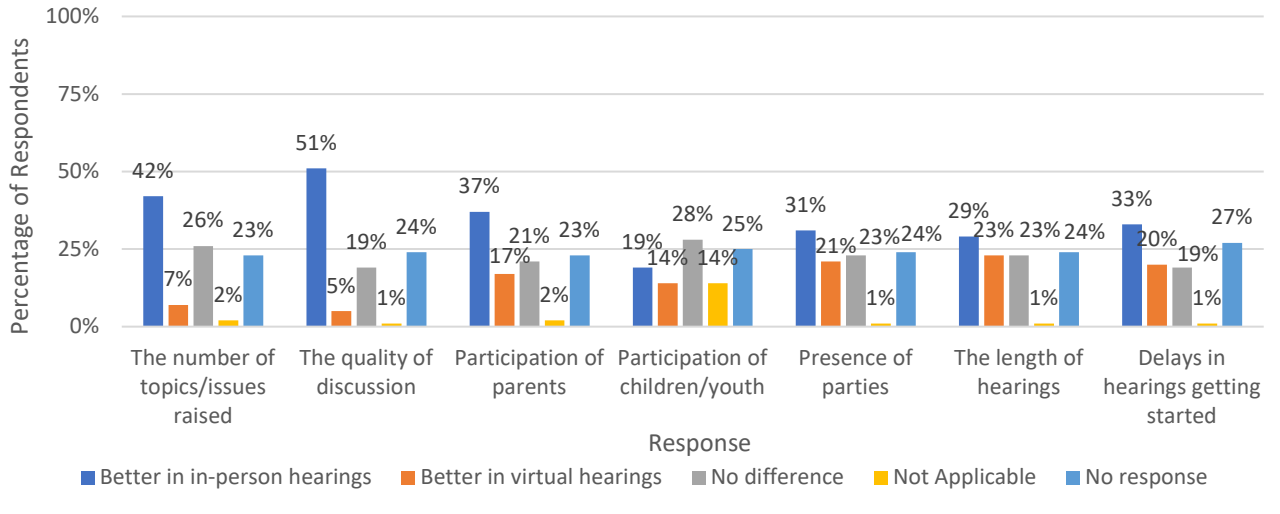
- Uncontested hearings and others if the fact pattern seems to fit the option.
- There are many hearings that are fairly routine and can easily be held virtually. I didn't realize how much time I spent in a car traveling an hour for a 15-minute hearing. Video allows you to see the other participants rather than simply by phone. I think that with juvenile hearings a majority can be held

virtually. Contested hearings should be in person.

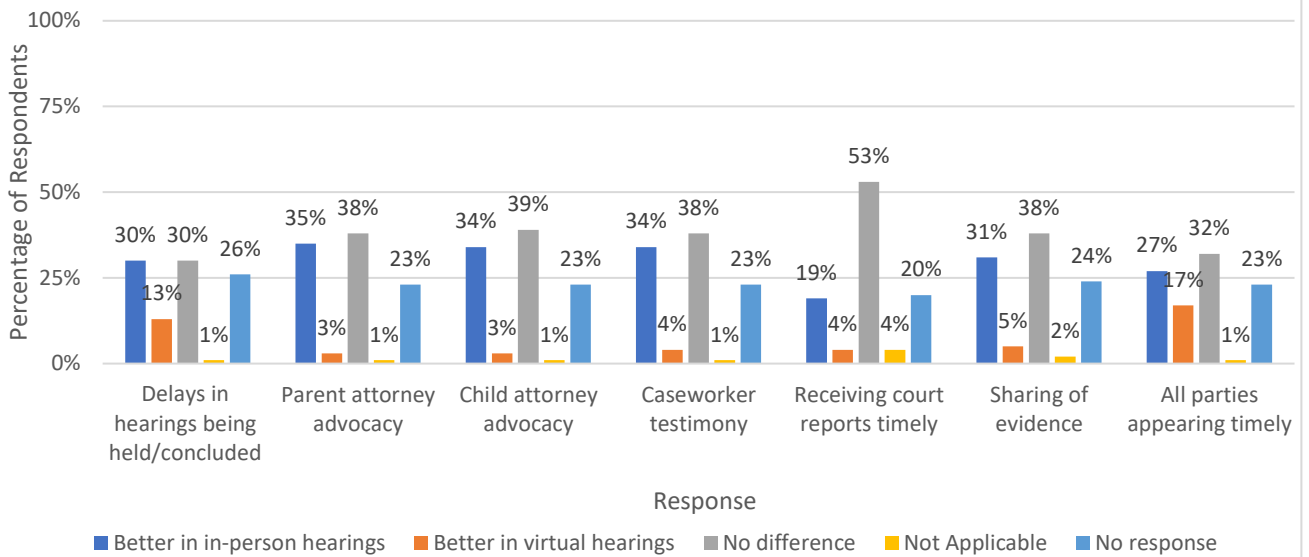
- There are clients who would not have participated but for the telephone option. They have barriers to attending court in person. There are also parents who have felt that virtual hearings have caused their situation to be unfairly ignored and they want us all in court. I tend to want what is best for my client, and that just depends.
- The more contentious or complex should be in person.
- The court should hold in person hearings when they are deciding something as important as parental rights.
- Some matters are very routine, and having everyone make the trip to court seems unnecessary when people can just call in. For example, if a case is going to be continued and we just need to reschedule, that could be done easily and efficiently with all parties calling in rather than appearing with our calendars. The other benefit is that parties don't need to factor in travel time to/from court, so it is possible to "attend" more hearings.
- Some clients want to be in person.
- Review hearings are quick & can be held virtually. It is helpful to be in the room for the more important hearings.
- Review hearings and CRB hearings are fine for virtual, all others should be in person.
- Remote appearances would be suitable for those who are out of state, witnesses that are out of the area, or those who may require ADA accommodations so they can stay comfortably in their own space.
- Perhaps kids could appear if they didn't want to miss school or parents who lived far away or for short more procedural hearings (status check in/trial readiness) but not contested substantive ones —we are losing a certain level of advocacy by appearing remotely and the delays we experience due to repeat technology issues.
- Parents sometimes find themselves at a great distance from a courthouse. Virtual hearings encourage their participation when they might otherwise find it easier to not attend in person.
- Only if participants cannot attend in person.
- My decision is based solely on safety and parental availability to conduct court hearings via remote.
- Maybe a combination of virtual and in person meetings.
- Judicial reviews or other uncontested hearings where there are only one or two issues in contest, not TPR or perm trials.
- It would depend on the circumstances
- It would be more convenient to allow for some virtual hearings. There are a lot of cases on the docket and attorneys and parents can spend all morning/afternoon waiting for 1 case to be called. Virtually, parents/attorneys are able to mute their phones and multitask until their case is called.
- It is beneficial to meet with all parties sometimes, but not every time. Transportation of incarcerated parties can be a problem.
- It is a viable option, particularly for cases with one out of state or out of area party. It could be more efficient if remote hearings were used for pretrial or uncontested matters.
- In cases where parties are on the same page only. Participating in hearings in-person provides an opportunity for parties to connect and build understanding.
- If the hearing is fairly simple and routine, virtual is fine. If dialog and sharing of verbal information is important, then an in-person hearing is better.
- I would only want to hold them for hearings when a party is out of state or a number of hours away
- I think the virtual hearings are more convenient and guarantee more parties present, however, the audio cuts in and out which is a major problem. This would need to be fixed.
- I think the family situation, access to technology has to be evaluated.

- I think sometimes it is better for the judge to talk to parties involved when he can look at them and see reactions etc.
- I think shelters can be remote. I think status hearings can be remote. I think contested hearings should be in person.
- I think parental termination should be held in person
- I think it should be an option at all hearings to appear virtually if needed even when hearings are taking place in person
- I think it is in the parent's best interest to proceed with in person hearings on the most delicate of matters.
- I believe handling Prelims, Reviews, uncontested matters virtually has been helpful to having my client appear. The admission of documents and evidence has been cumbersome at times. I have seen DHS employees receive coaching when they are testifying. We are still struggling through not having others outside of the view of the camera helping.
- Hearings where parents, kids or the tribe request and a judge makes a ruling given the circumstances requested.
- hearings that are brief, succinct could be done virtually
- For some cases it makes sense and already happened to some degree with phone use. I think we should continue to be flexible and use all the tools available when appropriate.
- For routine or uncontested cases only. In person court is just far more meaningful because a courtroom setting makes the hearing seem more important and there is also substantial and often important communication that is lost via video.
- Due to the likelihood that parents will participate
- Depends on circumstances- location, scheduling, availability
- contested trials (jur & TPR) should be in person
- Citizen Review Boards should be allowed remotely
- Attorneys seem available sooner if by video.
- Allow parties to appear by video for their convenience.

Consider the following hearings practices. Do you see a difference in virtual and in-person hearings in your jurisdiction?



Consider the following hearings practices. Do you see a difference in virtual and in-person hearings in your jurisdiction? (continued from above)



Do you have any other thoughts you would like to share about your court's successes or barriers with virtual hearing practice? (open ended response)

- All parties continue to have trouble with Webex. That said, the professionals are competent in their duties to connect to hearings. It is hard to participate only via audio. And everything takes longer in virtual hearings. Getting everyone signed on and "in" the hearing. Transitioning from one speaker to the next. It is not good.
- As a CASA I do not have the opportunity to sit in on pre-trial discussions during virtual hearings. I do not have the opportunity to visit with attorneys, observe parents, listen to caseworker discussions with attorneys and meet AG's. It limits my view of what is going on with all parties to the case.
- As CASA I very much miss getting to know / observe the lawyers and DHS players. This case is very difficult as there are child deaths involved. I have found in previous cases getting to know the players is immensely important. Earlier in the case I had Foster mom tell me I could not do a home visit d/t Covid and not able to observe DHS supervised visits...what what? Luckily the kids were moved to relative placement so that is good. The lawyers don't make home visits, the counseling and all services are remote. No one knows these kids except in a small video window. Body language is missed and etc. this has been a very unsatisfactory experience for me. I am currently a social worker in a hospital. I have been a CASA for ten years. I was a DHS Foster care case manager before that. I have been shocked at many faulty misunderstandings d/t the inability to observe, treat, in person.
- Barriers I have noticed are more about technology issues, quality of mics, bandwidth issues and unexplained glitches do slow things down and can be irritating.
- because of distance, this has been easier
- Clerks seem to have a difficult time making sure technology is working for everyone.
- Complications with getting IN to the hearing (technology)
- Court staff is lacking sufficient understanding and training in the technology utilized and are sometimes resistant to seeking assistance. Parent participation is case specific. In some cases, there is greater participation because access is easier, but in others there is less parent participation in the actual hearing. When parents participate via telephone, and maintain composure, it takes away some of the bias that sometimes occurs based upon physical appearance.
- Covid practice of remote hearings has been substantially successful IMHO. I practice in a giant geographic area and I find distance-challenged parents are more likely to attend a virtual hearing.
- For one, everyone can hear exactly what is being said. There have been some very successful hearings held virtually. The loss is the body language which is important. Also depending on the complex nature of the case, it's better in person in my opinion.
- Getting the process going was challenging. Once there was a routine in place and parties knew what to expect, things have run smoothly. I feel that the barriers presented by distance hearings are not as extreme as those often presented by transportation or time as parents need to travel to the courthouse.
- having only teleconferencing hearings are fundamentally disrespectful of the parents. the disembodied voice that terminates parental rights is inexcusable. it violates due process and fundamental fairness.
- I also think there is a disconnect with our clients that we are not sitting next to them in the courtroom as lawyers especially representing parents. I welcome the day we go back to the courtroom.
- I do not believe we are serving the best interest of the children with virtual hears. The hearings do not allow for discussion and the judges seem to rush through the case.
- I feel like quality discussions, clarification of rules and expectations, and accountability of all the parties as well as the important preparation and debriefing that happens before and after a hearing are all better served when the parties are present in person.
- I have only attended virtual for this case

- I personally find virtual court more convenient and safer. For instance, when court is delayed, I can be productive at home. I don't have to drive 80 miles and then be told my hearing is going to be postponed. The Foster Parents can be present and be right back with the children. If you cough you don't interrupt court. If you need a restroom break you can take it in virtual court.
- I think the discussions that happens in person prior to the hearings and after the hearings is what is lacking during Covid. The ability to communicate in person with the child is where the problem is for our advocates. The virtual hearing process right now, I feel is allowing greater access.
- It is a horror show of bad advocacy, oppression of the poor and lack of procedural due process which makes me want to quit law
- It is more difficult to get a good read on the participants when virtual. More difficult to establish good working relationships.
- IT is taking way to long for hearing to be scheduled
- It seems like participation is more successful because a teleconference is less of a time drain on the hearings. However, I don't feel that as a CASA my recommendations are taken into consideration.
- My concern regards the access to justice. It has been proposed that we have hearings by video, then if a party doesn't have the ability to do that, that party can just call in. I don't think that's fair, because it puts indigent clients at a disadvantage. This issue has been debated in our county as some people have suggested alternatives (indigent parent could go to the DHS office and be put in a room with a device that would allow appearance by video, or a space at the courthouse, etc.) but I haven't heard any practical solution that would be fair to all. I don't understand how that prevents the spread of Covid, which is why we are doing remote hearings, and I don't think it is fair to parents to tell them they have to travel to a DHS office (where their visits have been cut down because of Covid concerns) to have a hearing. It seems to be an unfair burden on indigent parents/kids, especially considering that many have trust issues with DHS anyway. The hardest thing for me as a lawyer is that is it more difficult to develop an attorney/client relationship with someone I only talk to on the phone or video (or if the weather is nice, outside somewhere, 6 feet apart while wearing masks). It's not impossible, but it's more of a challenge. It's especially difficult with kids, although now that more kids are used to video visits they seem to be better. I hope that this experience will result in making it easier to participate for those who can't be in court for whatever reason. We have all had to be creative in navigating our way through these challenges; I hope that those skills we are developing will continue to make courts more accessible for all. Personally, I can't wait to get back to getting dressed up and actually seeing people in person again. But as long as we have equal access for all, I think we are making the best of a difficult situation.
- My court was slow to embrace but now seems to have worked out many of the kinks. Attorneys are better able to be on time, I can communicate with clients during the hearings via text. Overall, it has been a positive experience with the actual court. I do think the amount of interaction with other attorneys and caseworkers while waiting for court is a value that I underestimated. Sharing ideas about a case, or brainstorming how to overcome certain barriers doesn't happen as much. The flip side of that is I have more office time to research, prepare motions etc. since I am on the road less.
- N/A
- No (2 responses)
- Our county has done well, and we are back to full schedule; however, there have been several times an attorney has asked for 5 minutes to call their client to clear up a concern so the admission can proceed and that request was denied and instead a new hearing was set.
- Our court has not offered video access to hearings, however all participants are accessing the hearings with a smartphone capable of participating in video conferencing. Appearance/participation is much

better virtually than it was in-person. If I left an answer blank above, it is because those parties have not been present in the cases I have worked.

- Parents often appear by phone and I prefer to be able to see them.
- Recurring technical issues
- The attorneys are not able to confer with the individual they are representing as well. We have paused the hearing while the attorney calls the client to discuss something happening in the hearing privately, but that is not the same.
- The biggest benefit of virtual hearings is participation. We are getting significantly higher participation not only from parties, but from peripheral people as well. We have had significantly fewer defaults, where parents lose due to not showing.
- The technology can be a little rocky every now and then. Not sure if that's all on the court's side, or on my home side. I will say that I appreciate not having to pay for parking when the hearings are virtual. The part I miss is just waiting for the hearing to begin and being able to chat or listen - I pick up a lot of good information that way.
- There are certain due process rights that are trampled in a contested hearing context when hearing done by telephone and video.
- There were many barriers when the transition was happening from in-person to virtual hearings. Mostly technology related. It has been a lot of work to get everyone caught up on how the virtual hearing systems work and what to expect. Now that those systems have been in place for months, it is running much more smoothly. I would like to see it continue as an option to be present virtually because it is so much easier for family members to click a link vs. travel to the courthouse, park, go through security, etc. It makes the proceedings more accessible when it works right. It helps attorneys save time traveling between courthouses. However, I also understand it makes it more difficult for an attorney to meet with a client before or after court. It also has the disadvantage of not allowing an opportunity for parties to engage with each other off the record, which often happens at in person hearings. But overall, the quality of hearings has been pretty much equal to those that took place in person.
- To date all of my hearings have been telephone conferences.
- When a hearing is expected to proceed without difficulty, virtual hearings save time and are usually available to all. Often, the problem of technology is easier to solve than transportation for parents.
- While I completely understand the need for virtual hearings, and am grateful we have a fairly effective system, I think our children and families desperately need the level of support and involvement they get from in-person hearings. I want to make it very clear that I think everyone is doing the absolute best they can. I just worry that permanency is being delayed because of technical difficulties, and parents and children are not able to participate. Often, parties have wifi issues, or the Court or parties cannot be heard, and the hearings end up concluding quickly because in-depth discussion is not possible. In-person court used to always give parties the chance to discuss the case before and after, and for attorneys to meet with their clients before and after as well. Often, that is the only in-person contact attorneys are able to get with their clients, and without it we see more and more attorney's being unable to reach their clients, thus unable to represent their positions. Overall, I sincerely hope we get back to in-person court as soon as possible. All parties and especially the courts have done amazing work conducting a multitude of complicated hearings via Webex video conference, but I don't see it as a viable long-term option for anyone involved.
- Would be great to have a room in the courthouse designated for remote appearance by video to enable social distancing. could have a court laptop, tablet, etc. w/ video enabled. Could help w/ parents who do not have internet and/or ability to connect via video.