



A GUIDE TO CHANGING YOUR IMMIGRATION COURT HEARING FROM IN-PERSON TO ONLINE

Do you want to change the format of your immigration court hearing from in-person to internet-based (virtual/online)? You can do this by filing a Motion to Change Hearing Format in your immigration case. This guide walks you through the steps to file a Motion to Change Format.

This guide is not a substitute for independent legal advice supplied by a lawyer familiar with your case. If you have an attorney, let them know that you want an online hearing, so that they can file any appropriate documents in your case.

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1. Who is this guide for?

This guide is for “**pro se**” people who are in “**removal proceedings**” in immigration court who want to change the format of their immigration court hearing from in-person to online (also called **internet-based**).

“**Pro se**” is a legal term that means people who are representing themselves without a lawyer.

“**Removal proceedings**” are also known as deportation proceedings. They are hearings held before an immigration judge to decide whether the person can be deported.

If you want your hearing to be online instead of in-person, you can ask the court for permission by filing a **Motion to Change Hearing Format**.

How do I know if my next hearing is in-person or online?

People who don't have a legal representative (lawyer or accredited representative) are generally scheduled for in-person hearings by default. To check whether your next hearing is in-person or online, you can go to <https://acis.eoir.justice.gov/> or call 1-800-898-7180 to find more information about your next hearing. You need to know your A number to access your hearing information, which begins with the letter “A” and is followed by an 8- or 9-digit number. This number is likely on your immigration documents.

2. How do I change the format of my immigration court hearings?

You need to prepare a **Motion to Change Hearing Format**. You must include:

1. Motion to Change Format

- The motion must explain why you want to change the format of your hearing to an online hearing. This could be because you have a medical condition that makes it difficult or unsafe for you to attend an in-person hearing or because you live far away from the immigration court and cannot afford to travel or take time off from work, lack of childcare for children, special events at a child's school, caring for a child or adult who cannot take care of themselves, or lack of transportation. Whatever your reason is, make sure you explain it clearly in your motion.

2. Evidence

- You should include any document as proof of what you are explaining in your motion. For example, if you are saying that your medical condition prevents you from attending an in-person hearing, include any relevant medical records or a letter from your doctor.

3. Proposed order of the immigration judge

- This is a standard document that is filed with most immigration court motions. You only need to complete the city and state of the immigration court, your name, and your A-number.

4. Proof of service

- By completing and signing this document, you are swearing that you are sending a copy of your motion to the government's attorney.

3. When and where do I submit my motion?

You should submit this motion **as soon as possible** to give the court enough time to decide before your next hearing.

You need to mail a copy of the documents listed above to both the **Immigration Court** where your case is pending and the **government attorney**.

How do I find the address for the Immigration Court?

If you don't know in which immigration court your case is pending, you can go to <https://acis.eoir.justice.gov/> to find out the location and address of the court. You need to know your A number to access the court information, which begins with the letter "A" and is followed by an 8- or 9-digit number. Once you enter your A number, look under "Court Contact Information" for the court address. It will look like this:



You can also call 1-800-898-7180 to get this information over the phone.

If you know the name of the immigration court, but you don't know the full address, you can find a list of all immigration courts at this link:

<https://www.justice.gov/eoir/immigration-court-administrative-control-list>.

How do I find the address for the government attorney?

The office of the government attorney is known as the “Office of the Principal Legal Advisor” (OPLA) or “Office of Chief Counsel” (OCC). There are OPLA offices all over the country – just like immigration courts. It is important to send your documents to the correct location.

To find out the address of the correct office for the government attorney in your case, try:

- Looking through your immigration court documents to see if there are any documents from the government. Typically, any documents filed by the government will have the address of the government attorney at the **top left of the cover page**. It will sometimes say “Chief Counsel, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement” followed by the mailing address.
- Calling the court where your case is pending and ask them for the address of the correct Office of the Principal Legal Advisor.
- Visiting <https://www.ice.gov/contact/field-offices?office=12> for a list of OPLA locations in each state. If the state where your case will be heard has more than one office, call the court to be sure you have the correct address.

4. What happens next?

Remember: Unless your motion is **GRANTED**, your case will remain in person. Do **NOT** assume that your hearing will be an online virtual hearing just because you submitted the motion.

After you submit your motion, wait for the court to send you a notice. If your hearing is coming up and you have not received anything, call the court to find out if they received your motion and what the decision was. A list of courts can be found here: <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/immigration-court-administrative-control-list>.

Don't wait and don't forget to stay on top of your case – it's your responsibility!

To check the status of your case, visit <https://acis.eoir.justice.gov/>. You need to know your A number, which begins with the letter A and is followed by an 8- or 9-digit number. Once you enter your A number, look under “Next Hearing Information.” It will look like this:

Next Hearing Information

Your upcoming **MASTER** hearing is **IN PERSON** on **April 11, 2024** at **1:00 PM**

JUDGE
[REDACTED]

COURT ADDRESS
3311 TOLEDO ROAD, SUITE 105
HYATTSVILLE, MD 20782

You can also call 1-800-898-7180 and check the status with your A number. Option #1 gives you information about your next court date. It will tell you whether your hearing is scheduled for in-person or internet-based (online).

If your motion is granted, you will receive a notice from the court and your next hearing information should say “INTERNET BASED”. Until then, make sure you have a plan in place to attend the hearing in person if necessary!

5. How do I join an online hearing?¹

Once you have confirmed that your hearing is “internet-based” (online), make sure you have a fully charged phone or computer that you can use for your hearing (it may be a good idea to have a way to plug the phone or computer in nearby), a good internet connection, and a private space that you can use. You will also need an email address to sign into the online hearing.

Online immigration court hearings are held over the Webex application. At least a few days before the hearing, download the Webex application on the phone or computer that you plan to use. To download Webex, go to this [website](#).

On the day of your online hearing, try to sign in to Webex one hour before the hearing in case you have any technical problems. Here is how to join your hearing:

- Go to this [website](#) and scroll down until you see your immigration judge. Click on the “Internet-Based Hearing Link” for your immigration judge.
- Enter your full name and your email address.
- Then, click “Join as a guest.”
- Finally, click “Join Meeting” to attend your online hearing.

Remember that the immigration judge may have multiple hearings scheduled at the same time, so you may have to wait a long time before you are called.

If you have problems joining your online hearing, or you lose connection during your hearing, you should contact the technical support staff at your immigration court immediately. You can find the [contact information for tech support here](#).

Remember: If you do not attend the hearing and you did not try to contact technical support, an immigration judge will likely hold the hearing without you present and give you a **deportation order in your absence**. This is called an “*in absentia* removal order.”

¹ Thank you to the Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP) for information that helped prepare this section of the guide.

6. Checklist for Motion to Change Hearing Format

Below are template documents that you will need to prepare a motion to change format. You can complete it on your computer or print it out (single-sided) and write legibly in blue or black ink. If you are completing it on your computer, click the greyed-out lines to add information. Complete only the greyed lines – nothing else!

Follow these instructions to make sure you are completing it correctly:

☐ On the first page, add:

- Your full name and your address at the top left of the page
- The city and state of your current immigration court
- Your full name right underneath where it says “In the Matter of”
- Your A-number next to “File No.”
- The name of the immigration judge
- The date and time of your next hearing.

☐ On the page that begins with “RESPONDENT’S PRO SE MOTION TO CHANGE FORMAT,” put your name and the type of hearing in the first paragraph. In the large space underneath, note the date and time that the in-person hearing is scheduled for and explain why you are asking the court to change the format of your next hearing. On the next page, in the last paragraph, add the type of hearing and the date and time of the next hearing. Sign and date at the bottom.

- To check the type of hearing, go to <https://acis.eoir.justice.gov/> or call 1-800-898-7180 to find out your next hearing information. It will either say “INDIVIDUAL” or “MASTER.” It will also tell you the date and time of the hearing.

☐ The next page says “Exhibits.” Exhibits are the documents that you are including as evidence. After this page, attach any evidence you want to include with your motion. Depending on the circumstances, evidence could be relevant medical records or a letter from your doctor explaining that you cannot attend an in-person hearing; a letter from your employer explaining why you cannot miss work that day; or any costs of traveling to the hearing and pay stubs or income records showing you cannot afford it.

- If you are including multiple documents, attach your evidence in an organized manner. Label and refer to each document in your motion so the

judge can easily match them to your points. For example, Exhibit A: Doctor's Letter, Exhibit B: Medical Records, etc.

☐ On the next page, above "ORDER OF THE IMMIGRATION JUDGE," add the city and state of your current immigration court, your name (next to "In the Matter of") and your A number (next to "File No.") at the top of the document. Leave everything else blank. The rest is for the immigration judge to complete.

☐ On the next page, where it says "proof of service," put your name, A-number, the date, and the address of the government attorney. Next to "By:" explain how you are going to send a copy to the government attorney. You can say, for example, "priority mail through U.S. Postal Service." With your signature you are swearing that you are sending a copy of the motion to the government attorney.

☐ Make two copies of everything. Scan or take a picture of everything to keep for your records. You may also want to email yourself a copy so that you have a record.

☐ Mail one copy to the immigration court and one copy to the government attorney. It is advisable to pay for what is called "Certified Mail" for the package to the court. This is an additional service, but it helps you have proof that you sent the documents. Keep the mail receipt with your records.

☐ If you do not hear back from the court a week before your hearing, call the court to find out if they have received your motion and what the decision was. Continue checking to see when the motion is decided. You can set reminders on your phone or calendar to check every day!

Name: _____

NON-DETAINED

Address: _____

Address: _____

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR IMMIGRATION REVIEW
IMMIGRATION COURT**

(City & State of Immigration Court)

In the Matter of)
)
)
_____,)
)
Respondent)
)
In Removal Proceedings)
_____)

File No.: A _____

Immigration Judge: _____

Next Hearing: _____
(Date & Time)

RESPONDENT'S PRO SE MOTION TO CHANGE HEARING FORMAT

RESPONDENT’S PRO SE MOTION TO CHANGE HEARING FORMAT

Respondent, _____, respectfully moves this
(Name)

Honorable Court to Change the format of their upcoming _____
(Master Calendar/Individual)

hearing from in person to internet-based (Webex), pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 1003.25(c). Pursuant to EOIR Director’s Policy Memorandum 21-03, video teleconferencing “may be used for any immigration court hearing, particularly when operational need calls for its usage” including where necessary “to increase convenience and accessibility for respondents; to reduce travel costs; . . . [and] to ensure timely adjudication of cases.” Memorandum from James R. McHenry III, EOIR Dir., PM 21-03, Immigration Court Hearings Conducted by Telephone and Video Conferencing, at 4 (Nov. 6, 2020). Moreover, video teleconferencing “increasing flexibility, allows the adjudication of cases from multiple settings without being tethered to a particular courtroom, and does not compromise the fairness of the hearing.” Memorandum from Sirce E. Owen, EOIR Acting Dir., PM 25-25, Rescind and Cancel Director’s Memorandum 22-07, at 1 (Mar. 14, 2025).

In support of this motion, Respondent states the following:

Based on the foregoing, Respondent respectfully requests that the Court grant the request for undersigned counsel to appear remotely at his _____ hearing on
(Master Calendar/Individual)
_____ as such format change is appropriate and practicable for all parties.
(Date & Time of Hearing)

Respectfully Submitted,

Signature

Date

EXHIBIT _____

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR IMMIGRATION REVIEW
IMMIGRATION COURT**

(City & State of Immigration Court)

In the Matter of: _____

File No.: A _____

ORDER OF THE IMMIGRATION JUDGE

Upon consideration of the **Respondent's Pro Se Motion to Change Hearing Format**, it is
HEREBY ORDERED that the motion be: ☐ **GRANTED** ☐ **DENIED** because:

- ☐ DHS does not oppose the motion.
- ☐ The respondent does not oppose the motion.
- ☐ A response to the motion has not been filed with the court.
- ☐ Good cause has been established for the motion.
- ☐ The court agrees with the reasons stated in the opposition to the motion.
- ☐ The motion is untimely per _____.
- ☐ Other: _____.

Deadlines:

- ☐ The application(s) for relief must be filed by _____.
- ☐ The respondent must comply with DHS biometrics instructions by: _____.

Date

Immigration Judge

Certificate of Service

This document was served by: ☐ Mail ☐ Personal Service ☐ Electronic Service

To: ☐ Respondent ☐ Respondent's c/o Custodial Officer ☐ Respondent's Atty/Rep ☐ DHS

Date: _____

By: Court Staff _____

Name: _____

A#: _____

PROOF OF SERVICE

On _____, I, _____,
(Date) (Name)

served a copy of this: **RESPONDENT'S PRO SE MOTION TO CHANGE HEARING
FORMAT** and any attached pages to the Office of Chief Counsel, Department of Homeland
Security at the following address:

By: _____
(Method of Delivery)

Signature

Date