



United States District Court
Western District of Tennessee

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TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR
SUCCESSFULLY PARTICIPATING
IN VIRTUAL COURT PROCEEDINGS

To: All Attorneys Practicing in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee

From: Clay Taylor, Director/Information Technology

Date: January 29, 2021

Throughout the current Pandemic, we have all worked hard to keep the legal process moving forward despite limitations on what we could do in person. To that end, we have relied heavily on technology as a means of communicating and conducting court. Given the efficiencies of conducting court virtually, it is likely that this approach will be continued, by some judges and as to some matters, even after the Pandemic is over.

Unfortunately, while holding court virtually has been effective, some participants have had technology challenges. Outdated operating systems and/or equipment leads to bad connections or the inability of a participant to connect at all. To maximize the effectiveness of virtual court hearings, most of which are now conducted via Microsoft Teams, the court recommends to all attorneys practicing in federal court that they access these hearings through a Windows PC system with the following specifications:

1. Hardware Requirements for Microsoft Teams on a Windows PC*

Table with 2 columns: Component and Requirement. Components include Computer and processor, Memory, Hard disk, Display, Graphics hardware, Operating system, .NET version, Video, and Devices.

* If you are using a Mac or a Linux system, you should visit the following link for more information:
https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoftteams/hardware-requirements-for-the-teams-app

Along with the PC requirements, you need enough “bandwidth” to give the best *Microsoft Teams* experience as possible. See below for the bandwidth requirements for *Microsoft Teams*, and please remember that when assessing your bandwidth needs, keep in mind that the number of devices using this bandwidth affects the amount available for any one use or user.

2. Bandwidth Requirements**

Microsoft Teams is designed to give the best audio, video, and content sharing experience regardless of your network conditions. That said, when bandwidth is insufficient, *Microsoft Teams* prioritizes audio quality over video quality. When bandwidth isn't limited, *Microsoft Teams* optimizes media quality, including up to 1080p video resolution, up to 30fps for video and 15fps for content, and high-fidelity audio.

The following table describes how *Microsoft Teams* uses bandwidth. *Microsoft Teams* is always conservative on bandwidth utilization and can deliver HD video quality in under 1.2Mbps. The actual bandwidth consumption in each audio/video call or meeting will vary based on several factors, such as video layout, video resolution, and video frames per second. When more bandwidth is available, quality and usage will increase to deliver the best experience.

<u>Bandwidth(up/down)</u>	<u>Scenarios</u>
30 kbps	Peer-to-peer audio calling
130 kbps	Peer-to-peer audio calling and screen sharing
500 kbps	Peer-to-peer quality video calling 360p at 30fps
1.2 Mbps	Peer-to-peer HD quality video calling w/ resolution of HD 720p at 30fps
1.5 Mbps	Peer-to-peer HD quality video calling w/ resolution of HD 1080p at 30fps
500kbps/1Mbps	Group Video calling
1Mbps/2MbpsHD	Group video calling (540p videos on 1080p screen)

** If you experience further network issues, you should visit the following link for more information:

<https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoftteams/prepare-network>

3. Use of External Speakers

Finally, the court's information technology staff has noticed that the use of external speakers at a high-volume causes audio issues. Therefore, if you need to use high-volume external speakers, please consider the use of a headset instead.

I hope this memorandum is helpful to attorneys and others in navigating the technical requirements for successfully participating in virtual court proceedings because, as noted above, the expanded use of available court technology, both during and following the current Pandemic, is a reality that will stay with us for a long time.

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