Online Video Hearings at the Social Security Administration

Our hearing offices are currently closed to the public due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This means we cannot offer in-person services in our hearing offices at this time. We are still holding hearings, but we are conducting them remotely for the safety of the public and our employees. You now have the option of having an online video hearing.

What are “online video hearings”?
An online video hearing is a secure hearing that we conduct by video, over the internet, using Microsoft Teams. You can safely and securely appear at an online video hearing from anywhere you have access to a smartphone, tablet, or camera-enabled computer with a private internet connection.

What are the technology requirements to participate in an online video hearing?
To participate in an online video hearing, you must have access to email. You may appear at the hearing using a personal desktop, laptop, Android/Apple tablet, or mobile device with a secure, high-speed, Wi-Fi or cellular data connection. Your device must have a camera, microphone, and speakers. If you plan to use a mobile device, you must download the Microsoft Teams application.

Before the date of your online video hearing, we will send you a user guide that explains how to access and use Microsoft Teams on your personal device of choice.

How do I notify Social Security if I want to appear at an online video hearing?
To notify us of whether you agree to appear at an online video hearing, you may:

- **Call Us:** You can agree to appear at an online video hearing by calling your local hearing office at the number provided in your hearing notice. We will ask you to provide your name, email address, and cell phone number for the day of the hearing.

- **Notify Us In Writing:** You can agree to appear at an online video hearing by completing and returning the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Hearing Agreement Form that we sent with your hearing notice. You also can agree to appear at an online video hearing by sending us a written statement that includes the following information: your name, email address, and cell phone number. You can fax or mail your completed form or written statement to your local hearing office. To find your hearing office’s designated fax number, visit [www.ssa.gov/appeals/hd_locator.html](http://www.ssa.gov/appeals/hd_locator.html).

- **For Representatives:** If a claimant agrees to appear at an online video hearing, his or her appointed representative, if any, must also agree to appear in that manner. An appointed representative should notify us whether both he or she and the claimant agree to appear at an online video hearing. We highly recommend that representatives provide this notification in writing by uploading it directly to the electronic record using Appointed Representative Services.

- **What happens if I do not want to appear at an online video hearing?**
We do not require you to participate in an online video hearing if you do not want to do so. If you previously agreed to appear at an online video hearing and then changed your mind, simply call your local hearing office at the number provided in your hearing notice and let us know.

If you do not want to appear at an online video hearing, you have the option of appearing at a hearing by telephone. If you also do not want to appear at a hearing by telephone, we will delay scheduling your hearing, or, if already scheduled, we will postpone your hearing until our offices reopen.

What happens before my online video hearing?
If you agree to appear at an online video hearing, we will email you precise instructions about how to access and use Microsoft Teams on your personal device of choice. Standard message and data charges may apply.

To ensure you can participate in an online video hearing using Microsoft Teams, we recommend you complete the following steps before your hearing begins:

- **Download and Install the Microsoft Teams Application (App) or Connect to a Supported Internet Browser:** Before the hearing, you must either download the Microsoft Teams app or access Microsoft Teams from a supported internet browser (Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge). Standard data charges may apply when downloading the Microsoft Teams application.

Please note that Microsoft Teams is a non-government, third party application. To participate in an online video hearing using Microsoft Teams, you may be asked to agree to Microsoft’s terms of use and privacy policies, which we do not control. Our Internet Privacy Policy describes our online information practices, and
is available at www.ssa.gov/agency/privacy.html. It does not apply to Microsoft Teams.

**iPhone, iPad, and Android Users:** If you choose to use a mobile device (e.g., iPhone, iPad, and Androids), before the hearing begins, download the free Microsoft Teams application from the App Store (for Apple devices) or Google Play (for Android devices) and install it on your personal device. You also must ensure that your mobile device is Wi-Fi accessible and compatible with the web-based Microsoft Teams technology.

**Personal Computer or Mac Users:** Before the hearing, ensure you can access the Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge internet web browser on your personal computer or Mac device.  

*Note:* MS Teams does not currently support the Safari or Firefox internet web browsers.

Before the date of the scheduled online video hearing, we will email you a meeting invite and link that allows you to access the video hearing directly. Use the provided link to participate in the online video hearing through the Microsoft Teams website or the Microsoft Teams app you downloaded and installed. We recommend that you click the link at least 15 minutes before the start of your scheduled hearing.

### What happens during the online video hearing?

An Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) will conduct the online video hearing in the same manner as in person and telephone hearings. The ALJ will ask you and any other witness to take an oath or affirm that your testimony is true. You will have a chance to testify and tell the ALJ about your case. The ALJ may ask you and any other witness questions to help make a decision in your case. You also will have the opportunity to ask questions during the hearing. You will be able to see and hear the ALJ and your representative, if you have one appointed. Other participants, such as a vocational expert, medical expert, or interpreter, may join the video hearing by phone.

### How can I prepare for my online video hearing?

On the day of the hearing, before your hearing begins, we may call you to confirm that you can access the online video hearing using Microsoft Teams and to provide technical assistance when necessary. You also should:

- Ensure your personal computer or mobile device remains connected to a private Wi-Fi connection or Ethernet connection from a private location (e.g., at your home or office).
- Connect to a nearby power source to charge your computer or mobile device as needed.
- Make sure your computer or mobile device's camera, microphone, and speakers are working. Notify the ALJ if the camera, microphone, or speakers are not working properly or if you experience any other technical issues during the online video hearing. In the event you become disconnected during your online video hearing, please attempt to reconnect as quickly as possible. If the ALJ is unable to continue the hearing, he or she may reschedule the hearing for a later time.

Please visit the www.ssa.gov/appeals/hearing_options for additional information about any technical requirements to appear by video using Microsoft Teams.

### Your Privacy Matters

During online video hearings, all employees connect to the hearing using SSA’s secure agency network and hardware. The ALJ will conduct the video hearing from his or her personal residence, using a secure internet connection from a private room. To further protect the privacy of hearing participants, we ask that all hearing participants join the hearing from a private location.

### Privacy Act Statement

**Collection and Use of Personal Information**

Sections 205 and 1631 of the Social Security Act, as amended, allow us to collect this information. Furnishing this information is voluntarily. However, failing to provide all or part of the requested information may prevent us from making an accurate and timely decision on your claim.

We will use the information to make a determination regarding your claim for benefits. We may also share your information for the following purposes, called routine uses:

- To third party contacts, where necessary, to establish or verify information provided by representative payees or payee applicants; and
- To private medical and vocational consultants, for use in preparing for, or evaluating the results of, consultative medical examinations or vocational assessments which they were engaged to perform by SSA or a State agency, in accordance with sections 221 or 1633 of the Social Security Act.

In addition, we may share this information in accordance with the Privacy Act and other Federal laws. For example, where authorized, we may use and disclose this information in computer matching programs, in which our records are compared with other records to establish or verify a person’s eligibility for Federal benefit programs and for repayment of incorrect or delinquent debts under these programs.

A list of additional routine uses is available in our Privacy Act System of Records Notices (SORN) 60-0006, entitled Storage of Hearing Records: Tape Cassettes, as published in the Federal Register (FR) on November 11, 2006 at 71 FR 1804; and 60-0320, entitled Electronic Disability (eDIB) Claim File, as published in the FR on June 4, 2020 at 85 FR 34477. Additional information and a full listing of all of our SORNs is available on our website at www.ssa.gov/privacy.