



U.S. Department of Justice
Executive Office for Immigration Review
Office of the Director
5107 Leesburg Pike, Suite 2600
Falls Church, Virginia 22041

FACT SHEET

Contact: Office of Legislative and Public Affairs
(703) 305-0289, Fax: (703) 605-0365
Internet: www.usdoj.gov/eoir

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EOIR's Video Conferencing Initiative

Video Conferencing (VC) is an electronic form of communication that permits two or more people in different locations to engage in audio and visual exchanges. VC technology allows court proceedings, as well as meetings and training, to be conducted efficiently and effectively, even though participants are not together at one site.

The Immigration and Nationality Act [240(b)(2)(A)(iii)] and Federal regulations [8 C.F.R. 1003.25(c)] authorize an Immigration Judge to conduct hearings through VC. The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) uses VC to conduct immigration hearings for aliens, such as those who are incarcerated or detained throughout the country. VC units have been installed at EOIR Headquarters and at 40 Immigration Courts and 77 other sites (e.g., detention centers, correctional facilities) where immigration hearings are conducted.

Benefits

This alternative communications resource is beneficial to both the Immigration Courts and the alien respondent in immigration proceedings. For the Immigration Courts, VC saves travel time for Immigration Judges – allowing them greater time to hear more cases. It also promotes effective case management by allowing Immigration Judges to conduct hearings, on an ad hoc basis, for their counterparts in other Immigration Courts and thereby assisting with unusually heavy caseloads. For the respondent, VC can provide for a more expedient hearing. Moreover, VC saves travel costs and improves safety and security.

Institutional Hearing Program

VC plays a critical role in the Institutional Hearing Program – a cooperative effort of EOIR, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and participating Federal and state correctional agencies to complete immigration proceedings for criminal aliens while they are still serving their sentences in prison for criminal convictions. The program helps ensure that criminal aliens are removed promptly from the United States after they complete their sentences.

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Focus on Due Process

Even with the many efficiencies of VC, EOIR's primary concern is to ensure fairness and to accommodate the needs of respondents and their legal representatives. VC procedures allow for granting legal representatives pre-hearing conference time and brief recesses during the hearing so that they may confer with their clients.

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