

General Information Regarding In- Person Appearances

Appearance: Trials and hearings are held in person unless you are notified otherwise. You may also be notified that an appearance is in person when there is not a trial or hearing date.

Location: The Erie County Family Court is located at 1 Niagara Plaza, Buffalo, New York 14212. The following are a list of the courtrooms (parts) by trier of fact with their window clerk's phone number:

Judges: General Erie County Family Court (716) 845-7400

- Hon. Margaret O. Szczur, J.F.C., Part 1, 7th Floor (716) 845-2721
- Hon. Kelly Brinkworth, J.F.C., Part 3, 7th Floor (716) 845-2722
- Hon. Sharon M. LoVallo, J.F.C., Part 4, 7th Floor (716) 845-2724
- Hon. Brenda M. Freedman, J.F.C., Part 6, 6th Floor (716) 845-2726
- Hon. Deanne M. Tripi, J.F.C., Part 7, 6th Floor (716) 845-1841
- Hon. Mary G. Carney, J.F.C., Part 8, 6th Floor (716) 845-2728

Court Attorney Referee: (716) 845-7450

- Referee Margaret Logan, Esq., Part 9, 5th Floor (716) 845-2729
- Referee Kathleen Crowley, Esq., Part 10, 5th Floor (716) 845-2730
- Referee Donna Marie Castiglione, Esq., Part 11, 5th Floor (716) 845-2731
- Referee Christine Saturnino, Esq., Part 11 or 12, 5th Floor (716) 845-2732
- Referee Tiffany Perry, Esq., Part 12, 5th Floor (716) 845-2732

Support Magistrates: (716) 845-7465

- Neil J. Bernholz, Part 16, 3rd Floor (716) 845-2736
- Magistrate Julie A. Dee, Part 17, 3rd Floor (716) 845-2738
- Magistrate Kristen Maricle Zarcone, Part 18, 3rd Floor (716) 845-2738
- Magistrate John S. Wiencek, Part 19, 3rd Floor (716) 845-2740
- John J. Aman, Part 20, 3rd Floor (716) 845-2740

Family Treatment Court Coordinator:
 Teri Ann McGinty-Sarratori TMcGinty@nycourts.gov:

Parking: There is a parking ramp adjacent to the courthouse, but there is a fee to park there. There are also multiple additional paid parking options in the area.

Security: In order to enter the courthouse, all members of the public must go through security, which includes metal detectors. No weapons are allowed in the courthouse even with a concealed carry permit. Please arrive early enough to do so as there may be a line of people waiting to enter the building. Please note that the building opens at approximately 8:30 a.m. and they do not allow entry after 4:30 p.m.

Dress: While I am confident that you do so without this notice, I do advise all clients to please dress appropriately for court (no pajamas, exposed midriff, sandals, etc). Business or business

casual dress is usually appropriate. Please note that the court and counsel may be in close proximity to you, so make sure that there are no scents that could prejudice your case, including but not limited to the scent of marijuana, alcohol, or excessive body odor.

Children in the Courthouse: With the exception of PINS (persons in need of supervision), JD (Juvenile Delinquent) proceedings, or in-camera hearings where the Court has specifically requested the presence of the child(ren), children will not be allowed in the courtroom. The Court prefers that children not be at the courthouse at all unless required by the Court. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a daycare facility provided as a courtesy for litigants. That service has since been suspended. Please plan accordingly for your childcare.

Timeliness: It is extremely important that you appear to court on time. I strongly encourage you to manage your time so that you appear in plenty of time to park, make it through security, and check in with the window clerk fifteen minutes prior to the appearance time. If you are late to court, the court may dismiss your case, enter a default judgment against you, or even issue a bench warrant in some instances. If you are running late for any reason, please notify me immediately by phone and email. Also, please call the court directly and notify the window clerk at the numbers provided above.

What to Do Upon Arrival: When you arrive (hopefully on time) please immediately go to the floor and part for the trier of fact you are appearing before. You must check in. Each part is prominently labeled with the part number and trier of fact. If a window clerk is not at the window, check to see if there is a sign directing you to check in to another part. Follow those directions. You must check in with the window clerk and have a seat in the waiting area outside the courtroom of the part you are appearing in. We will likely meet and speak prior to entry into the courtroom. Sometimes we utilize attorney-client conference rooms in the hallway to do so. Those rooms are reserved for attorneys meeting with clients, so please only utilize them if you are invited by your attorney. Please pay attention and listen, as the court officers will call out case names to indicate that the case is being called by the judge. At that point, counsel, the parties, and interested parties will follow the court officer into the courtroom for the appearance. No one is to enter the courtroom without the invitation of the court officer or before him/her.

General Information:

- There is no audio, visual, or other recording or photography allowed in the courthouse except as recorded by the court. This is not the time to livestream anything or take videos. Any violation is a violation of an order of the court and could result in punishment by the court.
- Additionally, there are a number of attorneys, court staff, video cameras, and potential witnesses in the building. Please take note of this fact and make sure that your behavior reflects the gravity of the circumstances and you present yourself in a way that best represents yourself. Information regarding any misbehavior could make their way back to the judge or opposing counsel.

- The court and counsel will take note of your comportment. Please refrain from yelling, speaking in the courtroom unless a question has been specifically asked of you, or making gestures or facial expressions that could be offensive.

Phone Usage: Please make sure that your cell phone (including alerts) is turned off or otherwise silenced. Please make sure to turn off the ringer and all audio notifications prior to your case being called. Additionally, it is considered highly disrespectful to the court to use your cell phone (including social media, search engines, text features, etc.) while in the courtroom. Please refrain from using the phone while in the courtroom.

Courtroom: When we enter the courtroom and the trier of fact is on the bench (seated) we remain standing until the trier of fact indicates that we may be seated. If we enter the courtroom and the trier of fact enters, we stand until told that we may be seated. The Petitioner (person first in time in filing) and their counsel will proceed to the table labeled Petitioner, usually the table closest to the door. The Attorney for the Child will sit at the table in the center, and the Respondent (person who the petition is filed against) and their counsel will proceed to the table labeled Respondent, usually the table farther from the door. The trier of fact (judge, court attorney referee, or magistrate) will sit at the bench. There is a court reporter and other staff, including a court officer. There may also be appearance by virtual means simultaneously and the appearance may be by Microsoft Teams (audio and/or visual) or telephone. When the court or counsel refers to being “on the record” it generally means the proceedings are being captured by audio and/or stenographer. The parties should not speak unless they are asked a question.

General Information Regarding Virtual Appearances

Platform: The Courts use Microsoft Teams to facilitate virtual appearances. There are options to appear by video to phone. If there is a hearing, trial, or otherwise must give testimony, you must be present by video unless the court has stated otherwise. It is always best to appear by video as the audio quality is significantly better and the Court prefers appearances to be as complete as possible. If you are not required to appear by video, please use the call in number provided (347 378-4143), then enter the conference ID followed by the hashtag/pound/# sign. From there, they should indicate that the party organizer has been notified and you will be notified when the meeting begins. During a virtual appearance, like an in person appearance, the Court may elect to speak with the attorneys with or without then allowing the parties in. Please patiently wait in the event that they are speaking with the attorneys. Please keep in mind that the invitation always includes the timeframe the court has set for the appearance, usually thirty minutes. You will not have to wait in the virtual waiting room all day.

Please note, that if you are appearing by video as recommended, that the time of the appearance is not the time to attempt to download the software. Please download the software well in advance of the appearance, preferably days prior in case you need technical support. The Court has provided support for their virtual platform here: <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url%3Dhttps%253A%252F%252Fportal.nycourts.gov%252Fknowledgebase%252Farticle%252FKA-01071%252Fen-us%26data%3D02%257C01%257CMCARNEY%2540nycourts.gov%257Cc44f3280428441f6859a08d86099e66c%257C3456fe92cbd1406db5a35364bec0a833%257C0%257C0%257C637365561389760342%26sdata%3DDIb5Z1xHPSvMQ%252FAMcVFctMInXvdx71cyPLENjoEBkHI%253D%26reserved%3D0&sa=D&source=calendar&ust=1663439317010998&usq=AOvVaw0DRuxhUU2VZZ0MC-1fRLi>. For your convenience, a print out of the materials is attached. If you need assistance in appearing virtually, please contact me..

Timing: Please sign in or call in to the appearance at least five minutes prior to the court appearance to ensure that you are able to

Court Procedure: If there is a virtual court appearance that is designated attorneys only, the Court will be meeting with just the attorneys. However, your input may still be needed, so please keep your phone handy and be available for text messages and/or phone calls should an issue arise that requires your input. The Court may record the proceeding. Please note that all of the above provisions regarding an in-person appearance not specifically precluded by the nature of the appearance apply to a virtual appearance.

Participation of the Parties: A virtual court proceeding is a valid court of law and should be afforded the same respect as any other courtroom. Please read the above information regarding an in-person appearance and follow the same guidelines, including but not limited to dressing appropriately for court and not speaking unless you have been asked a direct question by the Court or your counsel.

Visual Appearance: Please note that in addition, you need to be stationary. You cannot be in a moving car or walking around when you are appearing in court. You should only be conducting business related to the court appearance (i.e., not carpooling children, delivering door dash, going for a walk, making dinner, watching the game, etc.). Please be mindful that when you appear virtually, everyone including the court and opposing counsel can see the background. Please make sure that the background is appropriate (neat, tidy, no drugs or alcohol, etc.).

Audio Appearance: Virtual appearances have the microphones of multiple parties present. To prevent unnecessary background noise, please make sure that your background noise is kept to a minimum. Examples include limiting the noise from televisions and barking dogs. Please also keep your microphone muted unless you are speaking. These small details can greatly improve the court experience.

Parties Present: The only person that can be present during the virtual appearance is you. Not only should no one be present, no one should be able to hear or overhear the appearance, including children. Please plan child care accordingly.

Recordings: Please note that the provisions precluding anyone other than the court from recording or image capturing the proceedings apply to virtual proceedings.