



Committee Direction for Hearings During COVID-19

1. Introduction

Due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting state of emergency, in-person hearings at the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers have been discontinued until further notice. Consistent with its mandate to protect the public interest, the Discipline and Fitness to Practise Committees will continue to adjudicate matters that are referred to it through an adapted process. In order to facilitate that process in light of the pandemic, the direction set out below will apply to hearings until further notice (with necessary modifications as required). Notwithstanding the direction set out below, nothing in this Committee Direction shall limit the discretion of the Discipline or Fitness to Practise Committees to make particular orders as it deems appropriate in a given case.

2. Scheduling of Hearings

- All hearings shall be conducted via electronic means (teleconference and/or video conference) and/or in writing until further notice except where a panel or the Chair of the Discipline Committee or Fitness to Practise Committee is satisfied that an electronic hearing or written hearing would not be appropriate, in which case the matter will not be scheduled until it is possible to hold an in-person hearing.
- The Hearings Officer will liaise with the Chair of the Discipline and Fitness to Practise Committees in the normal course to arrange for the scheduling of electronic and written hearings.

3. Pre-hearing Conferences

Until further notice, parties are not required to submit paper copies of pre-hearing conference memos and are instead directed to file an electronic copy with the Hearings Officer by email to: akokolakis@ocswssw.org.

4. Hearing Documents and Logistics

- In recognition of the fact that different types of hearings i.e. contested, uncontested, motions etc., may raise unique issues regarding documents, it is directed that a hearing management teleconference be set with the panel chair at least 14 days in advance of the hearing. The parties shall contact the Hearings Officer to arrange for a hearing management teleconference by email to: akokolakis@ocswssw.org.
- The parties should be prepared to discuss the logistics of the hearing, including but not limited to, the format of all documents to be filed with the Hearings Officer, how exhibits will be handled, naming conventions for documents to be filed, how reprimands will be addressed, how to deal with waivers of appeal if applicable, etc.

5. Electronic Hearings - Court Reporter and Transcript

A court reporter will make an audio recording of hearings held by teleconference and videoconference. The transcript can be ordered by the parties in the normal course.