

Key Findings: Virtual Platforms

- All sites that responded to the survey indicated they were doing remote hearings
- The type of virtual platform the jurisdictions used varied across the state

Key Findings: Length

- Remote hearings take longer than in-person hearings (32 minutes compared to 23 minutes)
- There were technology delays in 21% of remote hearings
- Delays averaged 2 minutes

Nevada Remote Hearings Study

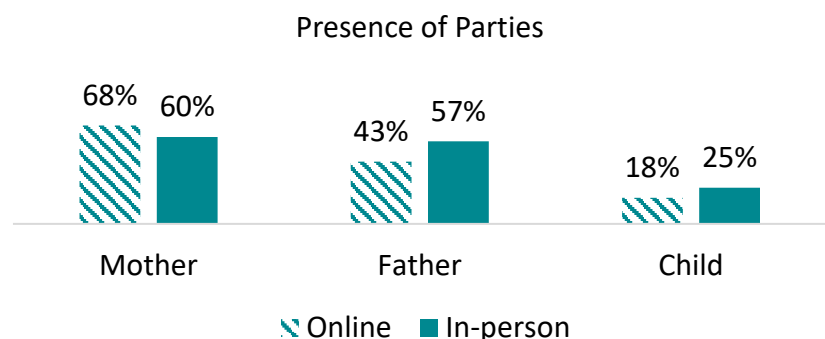
Introduction. In early 2020, the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) created a global pandemic and affected everyday life across the world. Nevada instituted a quarantine, shutting down all non-essential business and requiring people to stay home whenever possible. This affected the court's standard practice as they began trying to find ways to continue to hold child abuse neglect hearings. After the shutdown, many courts used teleconferencing to hold their hearings, but these efforts soon evolved into using virtual platforms such as Zoom or BlueJeans video conferencing. Nevada's Court Improvement Program (CIP) contracted with researchers to explore differences in remote and in-person hearings practice.

Method. Five judicial districts volunteered to participate in the study. They sent a sample of recorded in-person hearings from prior to COVID-19 restrictions and remote hearings that followed COVID-19 restrictions. In addition, a few items were included on a statewide survey to legal and agency professionals about the challenges related to COVID-19. These hearings were coded on dimensions of hearings quality, including: presence of key parties, engagement of parents and youth, discussion items, and findings on the record.



Findings

Presence of parties was statistically similar between in-person and remote/online hearings. During remote hearings, mothers and fathers were most likely to participate via telephone (59% and 61% respectively), while youth were most likely to participate via video (70%) in remote hearings.

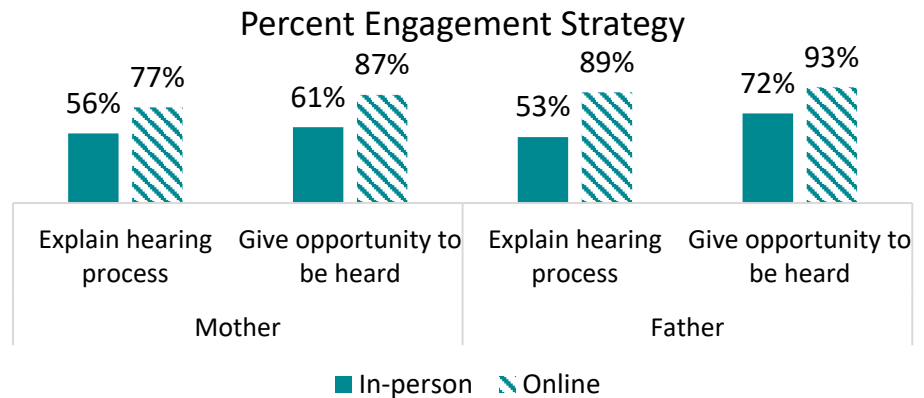


Key Findings: Discussion

- Discussion mostly looked the same, but included more topics in remote hearings
- Discussion rarely included a conversation of challenges due to COVID-19
- Judges rarely talked about technology challenges or gave instructions about technology during the hearing.

Engagement of Parties

Court observation revealed high levels of engagement across most judicial engagement strategies. These strategies were the same except in two areas. As reported in the figure below, in remote hearings, judges were more likely to explain the hearing process and give parents an opportunity to be heard.



Discussion

There were few differences in the topics of discussion within hearings. However, there was a difference in the breadth of discussion. When examining discussion from a list of applicable items that the courts should talk about, remote hearings talked about more items. Discussion covered 50% of topics compared to 43%.

Remote Hearings

50%

In-Person Hearings

43%

Lessons Learned

- One platform works better than many (e.g., teleconferencing and Zoom).
- Virtual platforms (e.g., Zoom) seem to work better than teleconferencing.
- Judges engage people in remote hearings in similar ways to in-person hearings.
- There may be equity and access issues that prevent parents and youth from actively and effectively participating.