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EOIR's Video Teleconferencing Initiative

Video teleconferencing (VTC) is an electronic form of communication that permits two or more people in different locations to engage in audio and visual exchanges. VTC 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 VTC. The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) uses VTC to conduct immigration hearings for aliens, such as those who are incarcerated or detained throughout the country. VTC units have been installed at EOIR headquarters and at nearly all immigration courts and at 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, VTC 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, VTC can provide for a more expedient hearing.

Criminal Alien Program

VTC plays a critical role in the Criminal Alien Program – a cooperative effort of EOIR, the Department of Homeland Security, 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. Moreover, VTC enables immigration proceedings to be conducted without the transportation of inmates from the secure confines of the correctional institutions, thus saving travel costs and improving safety.

(more)

Focus on Due Process

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

– EOIR –

The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) is an agency within the Department of Justice. Under delegated authority from the Attorney General, immigration judges and the Board of Immigration Appeals interpret and adjudicate immigration cases according to United States immigration laws. EOIR's immigration judges conduct administrative court proceedings in immigration courts located throughout the nation. They determine whether foreign-born individuals—who are charged by the Department of Homeland Security with violating immigration law—should be ordered removed from the United States or should be granted relief from removal and be permitted to remain in this country. The Board of Immigration Appeals primarily reviews appeals of decisions by immigration judges. EOIR's Office of the Chief Administrative Hearing Officer adjudicates immigration-related employment cases. EOIR is committed to ensuring fairness in all of the cases it adjudicates.