



**TEXAS BOARD  
OF  
PARDONS AND PAROLES**

**Number: BPP-DIR. 141.306**  
**Date: December 21, 2020**  
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**Supersedes: May 10, 2019**

## **BOARD DIRECTIVE**

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**SUBJECT: VIDEOCONFERENCING AND TELECONFERENCING**

**PURPOSE:** To ensure statewide uniformity in the utilization of videoconferencing and teleconferencing in the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles Central and Board offices.

**AUTHORITY:** Texas Government Code Sections 508.035(d), 508.0362, 508.041, 508.042, 551.080, and 660.147  
Texas Administrative Code Title 37, Part 5, Sections 141.91 and 141.92

**DEFINITIONS:** Designated Headquarters – the town or city where an employee’s primary office is located.

Lead Voter – the Board Member or Parole Commissioner who is designated to cast the first vote in the parole review process.

Unit of Assignment – the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Correctional Institutions Division unit where the offender is located.

Director of Staff Development – a staff member designated by the Presiding Officer who is responsible for coordinating statutorily required training programs as well as any other Board Member or employee training.

Videoconferencing and Teleconferencing Coordinator (Coordinator) – a staff member designated by the Presiding Officer, a Board Member, or the Board Administrator who is responsible for coordinating the videoconference and teleconference.

**DISCUSSION:** All Board of Pardons and Paroles (Board) business may be conducted in person, or by videoconference or teleconference whenever it is available and deemed appropriate. This includes unit and office interviews, hearings, meetings, conferences, trainings, and any other business conducted by Board Members or employees in furtherance of the Board’s statutory authority, duties, and responsibilities.

Section 660.147, Training Seminars, Government Code, requires each state agency to use interactive television videoconference technology and telephone conferences to the greatest extent possible.

It prohibits an agency from reimbursing a state employee for a travel expense associated with a training seminar conducted by the agency for its employee unless the chief administrator of the agency or the administrator's designee certifies in the supporting documentation that the agency:

1. does not possess interactive television or video conference facilities at the designated headquarters of the employees attending the seminar;
2. cannot purchase or lease such facilities at a cost less than the total travel expenses associated with the seminar; and
3. does not have access to another agency's facilities at the same location.

All other events and activities authorized to be conducted by videoconferencing and teleconferencing are outlined in this directive.

**PROCEDURE:**

- I. Training – The Board is required, by statute, to train Board Members and Parole Commissioners who are responsible for making determinations related to parole and mandatory supervision release; imposition, modification, and withdrawal of special conditions; continuance, modification, or revocation of parole or mandatory supervision; Board Members only who are responsible for making recommendations to the Governor for clemency matters; and designated agents who are responsible for conducting hearings for offenders who are in the revocation process.
  1. Board Members and Parole Commissioners – A Board Member who is appointed to and qualifies for office as a Member of the Board, and Parole Commissioners who are hired by the Presiding Officer and employed by the Board, may not vote or deliberate on a matter described in Government Code Section 508.0441 until the person completes at least one course of a training program that complies with Government Code Section 508.0362.
  2. Board Designees – Newly hired employees of the Board designated to conduct hearings pursuant to Government Code Section 508.281 must complete a training program before conducting a hearing without the assistance of a Board Member or experienced Parole Commissioner or designee. In addition, the statute requires an annual training program for all Board designees.
  3. The Presiding Officer has designated the Director of Staff Development as the training coordinator for the statutorily required training programs. The Director of Staff Development will prepare and submit a training program proposal to the Presiding Officer for approval. The Presiding Officer will approve the training program and make the final decision as to whether the training program or portions of the training program will be conducted by videoconferencing.

- II. Conferences – A Board Member or employee may attend a conference in person or by videoconferencing, if available. All requests to attend conferences in person must be approved, in advance, by the Presiding Officer in accordance with Board Directive BPP-DIR. 141.300. The Board Member or employee will submit a Decision Memorandum to the Presiding Officer. The Decision Memorandum will include whether videoconferencing attendance is available.
  
- III. Other Board Activities
  - A. Unit Interview – Lead Voter – When the Lead Voter determines it is appropriate to conduct an offender interview on the offender’s unit of assignment (unit), the Lead Voter or their designee is responsible for scheduling the interview. The Lead Voter may travel to the unit to conduct the interview. However, the Lead Voter may conduct the interview by videoconferencing or teleconferencing, if available.
  
  - B. Office Interview – Lead Voter – When the Lead Voter determines it is appropriate to conduct an office interview in the Board Office, the Lead Voter or their designee is responsible for scheduling the interview. The interview may be conducted in person, or by videoconference or teleconference, if available.
  
  - C. Unit Interview – Institutional Parole Officer (IPO) – An IPO will conduct an interview in person, or by videoconference or teleconference, if available, with an offender on the offender’s unit of assignment. However, IPO interviews for a capital case must be conducted in person.
  
  - D. Hearings – Hearing Officer (HO) – A HO will conduct a hearing with an offender in a county jail or other facility in person, or may conduct a hearing by videoconference, if available. Because of the due process rights required to be afforded to an offender, teleconference hearings are not authorized.
  
  - E. Meetings – Board, Committee, or Work Group – A Board or Committee meeting will be conducted in person, or may be conducted by videoconference or teleconference as authorized by the Open Meetings Acts. A Work Group meeting may be conducted in person, or by videoconference or teleconference as authorized by the Presiding Officer.
  
- IV. Scheduling the Videoconference – The designated Coordinator shall utilize TDCJ’s current Videoconferencing Guidelines to schedule the videoconference.
  - 1. As required by TDCJ’s current Videoconferencing Guidelines, the Coordinator shall schedule the videoconference 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting. A shorter notice is acceptable in emergency situations.
  
  - 2. For offender interviews, the Coordinator shall schedule the videoconference three workdays prior to the scheduled interview. Prior to scheduling the interview, the Coordinator will contact the Institutional Parole Office (IPO) Regional Supervisor

responsible for the unit where the interview is scheduled to be conducted to determine the availability of the IPO assigned to the unit.

V. Scheduling the Teleconference – The designated Coordinator shall utilize the Board or TDCJ teleconference services depending upon the type of meeting.

1. Routine Meetings - The designated Coordinator shall reserve the Board's teleconference number by contacting the Presiding Officer's office staff.
2. Board Meetings - The designated Coordinator shall utilize TDCJ's current Videoconferencing Guidelines to schedule the teleconference bridge.

**SIGNED THIS, THE 21<sup>ST</sup> DAY OF DECEMBER, 2020.**

**DAVID GUTIÉRREZ, PRESIDING OFFICER (CHAIR)**

*\*Signature on file.*