



**TEXAS BOARD  
OF  
PARDONS AND PAROLES**

**Number: BPP-DIR. 141.306**

**Date: March 1, 2024**

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**Supersedes: February 27, 2023**

## **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 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 to be 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, a director, or a supervisor to be responsible for coordinating videoconferences and teleconferences.

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

Section 660.147 of the 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 paying or 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 or 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.
  - A. 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 Section 508.0441, Government Code, until the person completes at least one course of a training program that complies with Section 508.0362, Government Code.
  - B. Board Designees – Newly hired employees of the Board designated to conduct hearings pursuant to Section 508.281, Government Code, 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.
  - C. The Presiding Officer has designated the Director of Staff Development as the training coordinator for all 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 decide whether the training program or portions of the training program will utilize videoconferencing.

- II. Conferences – The Presiding Officer may authorize a Board Member or employee to attend a conference in person or by videoconferencing, if available. Requests for in person conference attendance must be approved in advance by the Presiding Officer in accordance with Board Directive BPP-DIR. 141.305. The Board Member or employee will submit their request via an Inter-Office Memorandum to the Presiding Officer.
  
- 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 also conduct the interview by videoconference or teleconference, 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. 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 person in a county jail or other facility 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 – Board and committee meetings are conducted in person or may be conducted by videoconference or teleconference as authorized by the Open Meetings Act. A work group meeting may be conducted in person or by videoconference or teleconference as authorized by the Presiding Officer.
  
- IV. Scheduling the Videoconference or Teleconference – The designated coordinator shall utilize Microsoft Teams or Zoom to schedule and conduct the videoconference or teleconference.
  - A. Unit Interviews – The designated coordinator for unit interviews is the Institutional Parole Operations Parole Liaison. The Board staff shall contact the coordinator three (3) workdays prior to the requested interview date and time. The coordinator shall schedule the videoconference or teleconference after determining the availability of the Institutional Parole Office assigned to the unit.
  
  - B. Office Interview – The designated coordinator for the Board office is the Executive Assistant. The coordinator shall schedule and notify the participants of the videoconference the same day the lead voter notifies the coordinator an office interview needs to be scheduled.

- C. Hearings – The designated coordinator for hearings is the hearing officer. The coordinator shall schedule and notify the participants of the date of the videoconference three (3) days prior to a preliminary hearing and five (5) days prior to any other hearing (to include a revocation hearing).
  
- D. Meetings – The designated coordinator for regular meetings is the Board Member or Board staff conducting the meeting. The coordinator shall utilize Microsoft Teams for routine meetings. However, Microsoft Teams may not be used for Board or committee meetings.

**SIGNED THIS, THE 1<sup>ST</sup> DAY OF MARCH, 2024.**

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

*\*Signature on file.*