

Getting Started

- **Register for an EOIR Number:** <https://portal.eoir.justice.gov/>.
- **ECAS** (e-filing via ECAS, unless old paper-only case): <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/ECAS> & [ECAS FAQs](#)
- **Consider an ICE eService Account:** <https://eserviceregistration.ice.gov/> (this is mostly for prosecutorial discretion, since documents filed on ECAS will automatically be served on DHS).
- **Check the Hearing Status on the EOIR Hotline** 1-800-898-7180 or <https://acis.eoir.justice.gov/en/>.
- **EOIR Practice Manual:** [Lists the required documents](#) and order of documents for each filing type.

Before Master Calendar Hearing

- **Sign retainer and consent forms.**
- **Schedule virtual visit** with client within 48 hours of case assignment
- **Review crim databases and obtain certificates of disposition and police reports for convictions.**
- **Screen ALL relief and conflicts**
- **Determine if the client is eligible for bond or subject to mandatory detention**
- **Discuss upcoming hearing, realistic timelines, and any potential continuances with client**
- **Read through the NTA, *ASK YOUR CLIENT IF IT IS ACCURATE*, and consider holding DHS to its burden.**
- **Check-in with client on detention conditions and mental health**
- **Filing deadlines** are set by IJ in detained cases. Check with your IJ.
- **Contact family** with client's consent to gather evidence, witness letters, ability to pay bond
- **Draft a hearing plan**
- **Call IJ's Legal Assistant** if you have any questions about the case status or filings.
- **ICE ERO DO:** In charge of detention. **ICE OPLA ACC aka TA:** In charge of prosecution.

At Bond Hearing

- **Follow hearing plan**
- [Join the WebEx Courtroom](#)
- **Identify yourself** then wait for your client to be called by name or A#. IJ may offer to call later.
- **IJ will go over evidence**
- **Summarize why client is not a flight risk/danger** and to say what bond client can afford.
- **Call any witnesses** (optional)
- **Continuance to allow client to pay** or, **if denied, be prepared** for removal order, voluntary departure or continuance to pursue relief

At Master Calendar Hearing

- **Follow hearing plan**
- [Join the WebEx Courtroom](#)
- **Identify yourself** then wait for your client to be called by name or A#. IJ may offer to call later.
- **Pleadings:** Admit/deny factual allegations, concede/deny charge(s), and if considering asylum/WH/CAT, decline to designate a country. State all relief being sought/considered. State client's best language.
- **Sensitive matters:** Do not discuss domestic violence or persecutors in open court. Request a sidebar to speak with the judge and ACC privately.

Before Individual Hearing

- **Filings:** Know your filing deadline and submit your brief, evidence, witness list, and motions.

- **Prepare:** Questions for direct examination, hypothetical cross-examination, and redirect as well as a possible short closing statement. Arrange a mock trial with a colleague playing the ACC.
- **Witness prep** with experts and family
- **Note any preliminary matters:** Evidence to dispute, stipulations, changes to applications.
- **Review any records** from DHS to prepare for impeachment attempts.
- **Reach out to OPLA** in an attempt to negotiate any stipulations in advance.

At Merits/Individual Hearing

- **Follow hearing plan**
- [Join the WebEx Courtroom](#)
- **Identify yourself.** IJ may be late and ask you to return later. If tech problems, call IJ's legal assistant.
- **Advise IJ of any stipulations** from DHS, potentially do some last-minute negotiating, be prepared to summarize case and procedural posture to IJ.
- **IJ will swear in the client/witnesses/interpreter and go over evidence. Sequester witnesses.**
- **Direct, cross, redirect** - You decide which witnesses to call versus rest on affidavit, but can go to weight
- **IJ Decision or continuance for written decision**
- **Reserve appeal, if denial**