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HANCOCK COUNTY
FINDLAY, OHIO

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COITION PLEAS COURT
JUVENILE DIVISION
KRISTEN K. JOHNSON, JUDGE

**IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
PROBATE AND JUVENILE DIVISION
HANCOCK COUNTY, OHIO**

**In re: Temporary Orders Necessitated
By the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) Public
Health Emergency and State of
Emergency in the Unites States and
State of Ohio**

March 17, 2020

The Judge of the Hancock County Court of Common Pleas, Probate and Juvenile Division makes the following Findings of Fact:

1. On March 9, 2020 Ohio Governor Mike DeWine issued Executive Order 2020-01D “Declaring a State of Emergency” in response to the growing COVID-19 public health crisis.
2. On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 to be a global “pandemic” requiring “urgent and aggressive action” to control the spread of the virus.
3. On March 12, 2020 the State of Ohio Director of Public Health issued a ban on “mass gatherings” and Ohio Governor Mike DeWine ordered the closure of schools in the State of Ohio to control the spread of the virus.
4. On March 13, 2020 President of the United State Donald Trump declared a National Emergency pursuant to the Stafford Act as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.
5. On March 15, 2020 the State of Ohio Director of Health issued orders limiting access to Ohio’s jails to control the spread of the virus.

6. Various Federal, State and Local Health Agencies continue to urge limitations on public interactions in an effort to control the spread of the virus from person to person.
7. Temporary modification of the current rules, practices and procedures of the Hancock County Common Pleas Court, Probate and Juvenile Division are necessary in order to ensure the orderly and efficient functioning of the Court, to ensure that all essential functions of the Court are carried out, and to ensure the health and safety of the staff, parties, attorneys and general public.

Based upon these Findings of Fact, the Hancock County Common Pleas Court, Probate and Juvenile Division has developed and will continue to develop a continuum of flexible responses in response to this public health emergency. The continuum of responses is intended to protect health, to maintain essential court functions, and to continue to protect the rights of all individuals subject to the authority of the Court.

THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that:

1. All Local Rules of this Court may be temporarily adapted, modified or suspended to allow Court flexibility, within Constitutional limits, in response to the public health emergency.
2. The security policies and procedures of the Court may be temporarily amended or supplemented to protect public health safety while maintaining essential court functions.
3. The Employee Handbook provisions may be temporarily adjusted to maintain essential court operations and functions.
4. The Court authorizes, on a case-by-case basis unless otherwise approved, the use of audiovisual devices and technologies for Court actions and proceedings.
5. The public health emergency may be considered to be a finding of good cause for any purposes, including continuances deemed necessary, on a case-by-case basis.

6. The Court will have the lawful authority, within constitutional limits, to do and direct to be done all things necessary to ensure the orderly and efficient administration of justice for the duration of the declared public health emergency and such time after the declaration is ended deemed necessary by this Court.
7. The Court may make such modifications and authorizations in any manner deemed reasonable by the Court and need not follow formal processes for modification of Rules of Court and Rules of Procedure, and shall provide notification of any modifications and authorizations in such manner as may be deemed reasonable by this Court, including but not limited to posting same to the website maintained by the county, posting same in public spaces of the Hancock County Probate and Juvenile Courthouse, and by providing same to parties or members of the Bar by mail or email.
8. This Order shall remain in full force and effect until such time as same is modified or rescinded by the Court.



JUDGE KRISTEN K. JOHNSON

Hancock County Common Pleas Court
Probate and Juvenile Division
Temporary Policies and Procedures in Response to Covid-19
(Coronavirus) Public Health Crisis

All parties and attorneys are encouraged to exercise good health practices as recommended by the Director of Health and the local Board of Health when it comes to appearing for Court hearings. If you are sick, have been sick, or are concerned that you may have been exposed to the Covid-19 virus (or to someone that may have been exposed to the virus), PLEASE CONTACT THE COURT and opposing counsel to explore options on a case-by-case basis.

All Cases:

- For all hearings, the Court shall be notified prior to the scheduled hearing if any of the following apply to any party, attorney or witness: has travelled outside of the United States and returned to the United States within the 21 days prior to the scheduled hearing; has been exposed to the Covid-19 virus or anyone infected with the Covid-19 virus within the 21 days prior to the scheduled hearing; or has been quarantined, isolated or otherwise restricted by any health department, director of health, or similar entity. These hearings will be rescheduled by the Court for good cause.
- The Court will be restricting the number of observers in all hearings. Please be mindful of this new procedure and bring only the necessary individuals to Court for a hearing.

Probate Cases:

- All non-emergency hearings will be continued as the Court deems necessary. If you are scheduled to appear in Probate Court please contact your attorney to determine if your hearing is rescheduled. If you do not have an attorney, please contact the clerk's office at (419) 424-7066 to inquire whether the hearing is still occurring.
- The Probate Court at this time will still be issuing marriage licenses. The number of people in the clerk's office will be restricted so please be patient with the staff.

Delinquency/Unruly Cases/Paternity/Custody:

- All non-emergency hearings will be continued as the Court deems necessary. If you are scheduled to appear in Juvenile Court please contact your attorney to determine if your hearing is rescheduled. If you do not have an attorney, please contact the clerk's office at (419) 424-7066 to inquire whether the hearing is still occurring.
- All pretrials shall be conducted by telephone between counsel on or before the scheduled date and time. All counsel shall, prior to the pre-trial occurring, have had appropriate contact with their client and shall have reviewed all discovery provided up to that time. Counsel deliver the pre-trial form (Delinquency/Unruly) or notify the Court in writing (Paternity/Custody) within 24 hours of the pre-trial occurring.
- All adjudications and dispositions will be rescheduled until a later date.
- Any hearings for juveniles in custody will take place as scheduled and will be conducted via teleconference.
- All child support hearings will be continued. All custody hearings of a time sensitive nature will be held as scheduled.

Children Services Cases:

- All Shelter Care, Adjudicatory and Dispositional hearings will occur as scheduled. Any hearings of a time sensitive nature will also occur as scheduled. Any other hearings will be continued until a later time as deemed appropriate by the Court.
- Only necessary personnel will be permitted into the hearing. No other observers will be permitted. CASA and Children's Services will be permitted to have one person present for the hearing.

Traffic Cases:

- All traffic cases will be continued. Juveniles are given their court date by the police officer issuing the ticket. Juvenile should contact the Court at (419)424-7066 prior to their hearing to determine if it has been continued.