

The Court Administrator Robert Vaughn has released this information:

“In consultation and agreement with other trial courts in the county, the Domestic Relations and Juvenile Court Judges have decided to postpone all non-essential, non-emergency hearings for the next four weeks. The intent of this action is to reduce the volume of persons entering our Court to help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Emergency hearings and any hearing deemed time-sensitive by the individual Judge or Magistrate will be held as scheduled. Such hearings include preliminary hearings, ECOs, CPOs, bond hearings, and shelter care hearings. However, PCCs where the *children are stabilized in appropriate placement* should not automatically be considered “essential” unless otherwise so designated by the assigned Judge. Accordingly, Visiting Judges should likewise postpone those hearings if warranted.

Judicial and magistrate staffs are expected to call/email affected parties today to inform them of the postponed hearings for the week of March 16th. For the weeks of March 23rd, March 30th and April 6th, judicial and magistrate staffs will complete continuance forms, assigning dates from the bench, then forward the forms to the Assignment Office. Please note: Any cases assigned to the Visiting Judges will also need to be continued by the assigned Judge’s staff. Assignment will then process your continuance forms. Please be advised that service will not be affected (per Civil Rule 4); therefore, we will not ask any attorney or party to personally appear at the Court to sign a continuance.

Duty Judges and Magistrates shall continue to report to work on your assigned days/weeks to handle CPOs and other time-sensitive matters.

Lastly, with respect to parenting time issues and the state-ordered school closures, staff should advise parents who have shared parenting plans or custody orders that they should continue to follow those orders to the best of their abilities and in the spirit intended by the Court. Parties should adhere to all holiday and spring break schedules as designated by their schools at the beginning of the school year regardless of recent changes. They should follow the regular parenting schedule during all other times unless their orders specifically address school closures. The parties should also communicate about the location, health, and welfare of the children daily and should discuss travel plans and arrangements as required by their parenting plans or custody orders.

The changes outlined above will continue through April 10th, and we expect to return to normal operations on April 13, 2020. County judges and court administrators will be re-convening the week of April 6th to evaluate the current COVID-19 outbreak status and to ascertain whether any further extension of curtailed operations is warranted. Rest assured, we will copy our community partners on this email and post appropriate notices to our website and social media accounts to inform our stakeholders of our decision. Likewise, our Court has joined with the other local trial courts in a joint press release.

Judge Terri Jamison



Judge Terri Jamison

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