

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS, MUSKINGUM COUNTY, OHIO
DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISION

FILED
COMMON PLEAS COURT
MUSKINGUM CO., OHIO
2021 AUG -4 PM 12:58
JUDGMENT ENTRY

IN RE: AMENDED ORDER IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

This Court has issued a number of Orders setting forth COVID-19 protocols for court access and operations since March, 2020.

There are reports of a surge in COVID-19 Delta variant cases. The virus is spreading quickly and Muskingum County is now listed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as a substantial transmission area. On July 27, 2021, the CDC issued [updated guidance](#) which recommended that all individuals wear masks while in public indoor settings, if in an area of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission.

Given the CDC's most current guidance and Muskingum County's transmission rates, all employees and visitors shall be required to wear masks inside the court building. This new mask mandate is effective immediately and will remain in place until further notice.

The Court remains open for business from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Court staff shall continue to report to work in-person unless otherwise directed by the appointing authority.

The Court shall continue to conduct both remote and in-person hearings. The Court will strive to conduct as many hearings as practically possible remotely via appropriate technology. Any person with a verified COVID-19 illness or symptoms will be required to appear remotely, and any person with concerns about exposure may request the Court arrange for remote appearance, or other appropriate accommodations in advance of their scheduled hearing. Whether to continue the matter or hold the hearing remotely remains at the discretion of the Judge and Magistrate.

All persons entering the second floor of the building shall wear at all times a face mask or material that covers the mouth and nose. Each person is responsible for providing their own mask. Any person who violates or refuses to comply with this requirement will be denied entry or escorted from the building. Filings will continue to be accepted via U.S. Mail filing and in-person filing. Any person entering the second floor of the building to file pleadings or other documents, or conduct other business with the Clerk's office, shall be required to wear a facial covering that covers the mouth and nose.

Physical distancing shall continue to be maintained and enforced in accordance with federal and state guidelines. This complies with guidelines to reduce the number of persons coming into a workplace, keep gatherings under ten (10) people at a time, and maintain appropriate social distancing of six (6) feet or more.

In-person hearings will be subject to continuing restrictions. Only parties, and counsel of record, will be permitted access at the scheduled time. Witnesses may not be permitted into the building until they are called to testify. Parties/counsel should have the ability to contact

witnesses by phone or email when the court is ready. Be advised, this procedure may slow the process and result in exceeding time allotted for a matter, which may require continuing a matter in progress to a later date.

Emergency hearings and any hearing deemed time-sensitive by the individual Judge or Magistrate will be held in-person. Such hearings include, but are not limited to, emergency hearings, requests for ex parte orders, contempt hearings, and Civil Protection Order hearings. However, where children are stabilized in appropriate placement or no emergency is found to exist, hearings will not automatically be considered "essential" unless otherwise so designated by the assigned Judge or Magistrate.

In-person contact for purposes of drug testing shall be permitted.

Court staff shall ensure proper social distancing and occupancy requirements in the wait areas and other areas of the second floor. Social distance of at least six feet shall be strictly enforced.

Conference rooms may be utilized as directed by Court staff; however, no more than three people shall be permitted in a conference room at any time. Court staff shall ensure compliance with this order and failure to comply with Court staff's direction shall constitute a public disruption and just cause for persons to be removed from the building.

A maximum of ten people shall be permitted in the courtrooms – this includes court staff, counsel, parties, interpreters, and other necessary persons. All witnesses should remain outside of the building until called for their attendance.

The Self-Represented Clinic held the second Thursday of each month shall continue to utilize telephone / other electronic methods.

Court-ordered mediations and meetings with the Court's Parenting Services Coordinator and Court Investigator shall continue to be held remotely as much as practicable. If in-person meetings are deemed necessary by the appropriate Court staff, all guidelines set forth herein shall apply.

This Order shall be served on the Supreme Court of Ohio, Muskingum County Board of Commissioners, Muskingum County Clerk of Court, and Muskingum County Bar Association and be posted on the website of this Court.

IT IS SO ORDERED.



MARIA N. KALIS, JUDGE