

**IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
PROBATE AND JUVENILE DIVISIONS
MADISON COUNTY, OHIO**

2020 MI 003

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19
(CORONAVIRUS) PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS**

FILED
PROBATE COURT
2020 MAR 18 PM 13:18
CHRISTOPHER J. BROWN
JUDGE, MADISON COUNTY, OHIO

The Probate and Juvenile Division Judge of the Madison County Court of Common Pleas 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 16, 2020 Ohio Department of Health Director Dr. Amy Acton canceled the primary election in the State of Ohio due to the public health state of emergency overriding the Orders of both the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas as well as the Supreme Court of Ohio to the contrary.
4. Within the week the Center for Disease Control has issued warnings for individuals not to gather first in groups of 500 and progressively regressed to 150, to 50, to now 10 people in order to contain the spread of the COVID-19 (Coronavirus). These recommendations from the CDC have been publicly endorsed by the Ohio Department of Health Director Dr. Amy Acton as well as Governor Mike Dewine.

Based upon these Findings of Fact, the Probate and Juvenile Divisions of the Court of Common Pleas have developed a continuum of flexible responses in case the public health crisis escalates. The continuum of responses is intended to protect public 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 the Court will remain open for business subject to the following measures which are designed to protect the health of all:

1. All custody cases are hereby continued until further order of the Court.
2. All trials are hereby continued until further order of the Court.
3. All other scheduled hearings shall be held unless the parties are directly notified otherwise by the Court. This is due to the fact our Court hearings only have an average of five participants, are spaced at 15 to 30 minute intervals, and last for a very short duration. This fits well within the guidelines set forth by the Center for Disease Control and the Ohio Department of Health.
Only necessary parties will be permitted in the Courtroom. All others will be escorted from the Courthouse by security.

4. Only a parent, guardian, or custodian shall be permitted in the Courtroom for juvenile cases.

The Court will not allow other family members, friends, pastors, or other individuals in the Courthouse. After a hearing all participants shall immediately vacate the Courthouse. Many times attorneys and clients linger in the hallway afterwards to discuss matters pertaining to their case. This is strictly prohibited until further notice.

5. Adoption cases shall continue to be heard. Only the Petitioners and counsel shall be admitted to the Courthouse. The Court realizes this decision disrupts a very significant day for all involved which should be shared with loved ones and close friends but it is a necessary precaution given the circumstances.

6. Continuances for cases will be decided on a case by case basis. Obviously the Court will be sensitive to any medically related request made on behalf of a party, counsel, or material witness. As always the Court expects requests for continuances to be made in good faith.

7. The Court will continue to accept in person filings. However any filings should be made via fax or regular mail when possible. If filings are time sensitive the Court urges they be filed well in advance by one of the remote means suggested. Please review the Court's Local Rules for guidance to the filing of documents remotely.

8. The Probate Court shall not issue marriage licenses until further notice. The Court finds this to be a non-essential function and the continuance of this function significantly increases the risk of the spread of the Covid-19 virus due to the necessary exchange of information and extended close personal contact between the applicants and court staff.

9. Any continuance implemented by this Order or any subsequent Order of this Court are within the authority of ORC 2945.72(H).

The Court specifically finds that the public health interests are paramount and the ends of justice demand this Order.



JUDGE