

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS  
ROSS COUNTY, OHIO

2020 MAR 18 AM 10:12

In Re:

COURT OPERATIONS DURING  
THE COVID-19(CORONAVIRUS)  
PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

JUDGE MICHAEL M. CATER  
JUDGE J. JEFFREY BENSON  
JUDGE MATTHEW S. SCHMIDT

**TEMPORARY ORDER**

The Judges of the Ross County, Ohio Court of Common Pleas, General & Domestic Division, and Juvenile & Probate Division, make the following findings of fact:

- 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.
- 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.
- On March 13, 2020 President Donald Trump declared a national emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based upon these findings of fact, the Ross County Court of Common Pleas has 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.

**IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED:**

1. **Local Rules.** The Local Rules of Court may be temporarily adapted to allow Court flexibility, within constitutional limits, in response to the public health emergency.
2. **Security.** The Court’s security policies may be temporarily amended or supplemented to protect public health while maintaining essential court functions. All individuals, including court

personnel, desiring to enter the courthouse may be subject to available health screening or testing and excluded from admission based upon the results of such screening or testing. The Judge of the Court to which admission is sought retains the ultimate authority to exclude individuals deemed a potential health risk.

**3. Participant Limitation.** Access to the Court shall be limited to parties, attorneys, witnesses, individuals conducting necessary business with the Court, and members of the media whose presence has been approved upon request to the Court.

**4. Personnel Policy.** The Court's, and county's (to the extent that it affects court employees) personnel policy may be temporarily adjusted to maintain essential court operations and functions. Employees of the Court not on duty at the courthouse may be permitted to work remotely in accordance with their hiring authority. All judicial employees are deemed essential, and such employees working from home shall be paid their regular salaries.

**5. Notification of Illness.** Judicial staff, attorneys, witnesses, jurors, and security personnel who exhibit signs of illness shall notify their employing or reporting authority by telephone or email and shall not come into the courthouse or report for duty unless specifically instructed to do so by the employing or reporting authority.

**6. Authority of the Court.** 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.

**7. Continuances.** This public health emergency may be considered to be a finding of "just cause" for continuances deemed necessary by the Judges on a case-by-case basis.

**8. Minimization of Contact.** The Court shall attempt to minimize the amount of travel and social interaction of litigants, attorneys, witnesses, jurors, law enforcement personnel, and judicial

personnel by continuing non-essential proceedings or conducting proceedings, as far as practical, by remote video or telephonic means. To that end the Court authorizes the use of audiovisual devices and technologies for all actions and proceedings.

**9. Arraignments.** Criminal arraignments may be held by video from the Ross County Jail, and any institution of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, or any other facility.

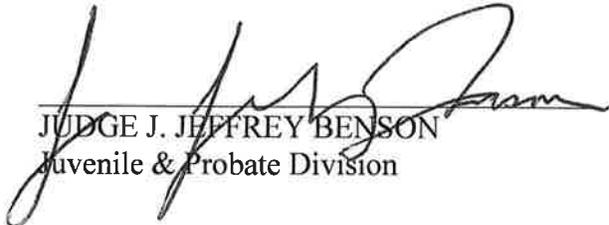
**10. Pre-Trials & Status Conferences.** All civil and domestic pre-trials and status conferences shall be conducted by telephone. The plaintiff's attorney in each case shall be responsible for initiating the conference call with each party and the Court at the time scheduled. Criminal, juvenile unruly and delinquent, and abuse, neglect and dependency pre-trial and status conferences may be conducted by telephone at the discretion of the Court.

THESE ORDERS SHALL REMAIN IN PLACE UNTIL  
FURTHER ORDER OF THE COURT.



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JUDGE MICHAEL M. ATER  
General & Domestic Division



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JUDGE J. JEFFREY BENSON  
Juvenile & Probate Division



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JUDGE MATTHEW S. SCHMIDT  
General & Domestic Division