

Memorandum

To: Attorneys and Court Parties

From: Barbara Schneider Carter, Administrative Judge

Date: March 17, 2020

Re: Amendments to Policies due to Public Health Crisis

In response to Ohio's State of Emergency, please refer to the following changes in courtroom and Case Management policy in the Domestic Relations Division of Common Pleas Court. These changes may be revised as necessary based upon the needs and interests of court employees and policies of other Butler County agencies. These policies are based upon social health recommendations at this time and best practices including limiting face to face interaction; social distancing; hand sanitization and the like.

- Ø Beginning Monday, March 16, 2020, all scheduling conferences and pre-trial hearings will be held by telephone conference. They will be conducted in the courtroom. FTR will be used for telephone conferences.
- Ø Objection hearings will be held by telephone in the courtroom. Motions for Clarification will be by telephone. All will be on record. Decisions on evidentiary hearings, including final hearings, will be made on a case-by-case basis, and may be continued. If the movant wishes to present argument, written argument will be required in lieu of appearance and argument in the courtroom.
- Ø DV hearings will take place as normal. However, only litigants, attorneys and witnesses will be permitted in the courtroom. If large groups of witnesses appear, they will be asked to wait in the rotunda or outside of the security area.
- Ø Entries will be mailed to participants on matters not requiring personal service. Signatures from parties will be reserved for the most necessary – including orders to appear; domestic violence orders and others at court discretion.
- Ø CSEA Hearings: Entries may be prepared and served at the security checkpoints, with a date at least 60 days out.
- Ø If an obligor fails to appear, a warrant will be issued. The Butler County Jail will determine whether these inmates will be released on their own recognizance and are required to appear Wednesday, June 24, 2020 at 1:00 P.M.

- Ø Hearings are to be set or reset at least eleven weeks out. Dissolution Final Hearings and Final Domestic Violence Hearings are the exception due to the time guidelines. If a respondent requests and agrees to a continuance on a domestic violence case, the time on the case will pend for Supreme Court Report purposes due to unavailability of defendant.
- Ø Court staff will contact attorneys and litigants to relay these new policies for hearings scheduled in the near future.
- Ø Effective immediately, Case Management will be closed to the public during business hours. If attorneys or members of the public have been contacted to pick up documents in their boxes, they may collect the paperwork and shall immediately leave.
- Ø **All submittals to the Case Management Office are to be received by fax or email. Documents may be faxed to 513-785-5337 or 513-887-3560. Documents may be emailed to drcourtwebresponse@butlercountyohio.org.**
- Ø Case Management will approve documents submitted by fax or email as originals with no copies required.
- Ø Once CM stamps the faxed or emailed document approved, and get the hearing officer's signature, CM will fax or email it back to the party if it's an initial filing to open a case or a motion. CM will make copies of Decrees, and forward to the case card or judges for signature.
- Ø The parties are responsible for taking the stamped approved fax or email document and making copies.
- Ø The Clerk will be authorized to take the approved faxed copies and filing fee. The difference will be that the approved stamp is not red, signatures are not in original ink and parties will make copies after approval.
- Ø All original documents currently in the office will be checked and mailed back to parties. If not approved, parties will need to fax or email the corrected documents back to Case Management.
- Ø As an exception, Case Management will file Objections in order to insure compliance with Civil Rules. These must be sent via fax or email.

Family Unit Services Suspended: Effective immediately, Pursuant to Butler County Local Rule DR 42 – Family Unit services, Domestic Relations Division is suspending court ordered Home Investigations and Supervised Parenting Time appointments through April 10, 2020.

If you have any questions, please contact the Case Management office of the court, at 513-887-3100 option 2. Thank you for your attention to this matter.