IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
OF MERCER COUNTY, OHIO

In the Matter of:

ALTERNATIVE PROTOCOLS FOR OPERATION OF AND MAINTAINING SERVICES OF THE MERCER COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS, GENERAL DIVISION IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

JOURNAL ENTRY

FILED
MAR 18 2020
MERCER COUNTY CLERK OF COURTS
CELINA, OHIO

In response to the present COVID-19 pandemic, the Mercer County Common Pleas Court, while seeking to protect the public and the court staff and maintain essential court functions, hereby gives notice of changes in the standard protocols to assure the continuous operation of and maintaining services of the court as follows:

1. Increase availability and use of hand sanitizers.

2. Increased attention to disinfecting hard surfaces such as counters, desktops, and operated equipment.

3. Decrease personal attendance by attorneys for court proceedings in civil, criminal, and domestic relations.

4. Increased use of telephone pretrials, telephone status reports, telephone attorney conferences for civil, criminal, and domestic relations matters.

5. Decrease use of in-chambers conferences and increased use of courtroom for pretrials and attorney conferences in order to assure social distancing.

6. Decrease personal appearances of parties, including incarcerated defendants on criminal docket and increase use of audio/video connection through Mercer County Adult Detention Facility for on-record proceedings for those criminal defendants, and providing online access to parenting class for domestic relations litigants.

7. *Sua Sponte* continuances of scheduled jury trials for civil and criminal docket on a case-by-case basis.

8. Emphasis on use of technology, including online, facsimile machines, and email, for receipt and transmission of information.

9. Generally decrease emphasis on face-to-face communication and increase emphasis on communication using technology whenever possible.

During this public health emergency, the court believes it is necessary to maintain services to our citizens and provide them continuing access to justice through our court. The court will entertain any reasonable requests for alternatives to maintain that end on a case-by-case basis. Addressing this crisis with the idea of maintaining services to the public is a challenge, but one that should be undertaken without losing sight of the importance of treating people with kindness, courteousness, and respect so that our system may provide a fair and just result to the parties whose conflicts the court addresses.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Judge Jeffrey R. Ingraham

FILED

MAR 18 2020

MERCER COUNTY CLERK OF COURTS
CELINA, OHIO