

County of Centre



PAMELA A. RUEST
PRESIDENT JUDGE

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FORTY-NINTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA
Judge's Chambers

Centre County Courthouse
102 South Allegheny Street, Room 203
Bellefonte, Pennsylvania 16823

JONATHAN D. GRINE, JUDGE
KATHERINE V. OLIVER, JUDGE
BRIAN K. MARSHALL, JUDGE
DAVID E. GRINE, SENIOR JUDGE
THOMAS KING KISTLER, SENIOR JUDGE

MEMORANDUM

To: Common Pleas Judges, Magisterial District Judges,
Court Departments, Court-Related Departments and
Court Staff

Date: March 17, 2020

From: Pamela A. Ruest, President Judge

Subject: **Judicial Emergency Response**

The Court has declared a judicial emergency until April 14, 2020. Effective immediately, and until further notice, the Court has adopted the following policies and/or restrictions:

- Court employees will not attend off-site conferences or trainings;
- Court events/meetings (as distinguished from court hearings and conferences) will be rescheduled or held virtually.

In addition to the above, the Court is implementing the following policies immediately, and until further notice:

- When possible use email and electronic mediums to transmit documents and Court Orders;
- Limit the number of persons in chambers and other meeting/conference rooms

to comply with social distancing recommendations;

- A liberal continuance request policy shall be instituted with due consideration to health concerns;
- **All Jury trials** (civil and criminal) have been cancelled through and including April 14, 2020;
- **Criminal Jury selection** scheduled for April 6, 2020 and **Civil Jury selection** scheduled for April 7, 2020 are cancelled;
- **Criminal Pre-Trial Conferences** scheduled for March 20, 2020, and Inmate Pretrial Conferences scheduled for March 26, 2020 are cancelled.
- Scheduling of larger court lists (Custody Court, Sentencings, Summary Appeals, etc.) will be “staggered” (9:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 10:00 a.m., etc.) to avoid larger groups of litigants/attorneys in the courtrooms. Scheduling will be adjusted starting ASAP;
- Court proceedings/conferences may be rescheduled at the discretion of the presiding judge.
- **Central Court** is cancelled to April 14, 2020, except for inmates whose cases will be addressed through video conferencing;
- **ARD Court** held on Wednesdays is cancelled to April 14, 2020;
- The operation of Rule of Criminal Procedure 600 shall be suspended during this emergency period.
- No Person In Custody will be transported to the courthouse for any proceeding absent an order from the Court. All proceedings will be scheduled using video conferencing. If a waiver is required and not received, the Court will determine what action to take and the case may be continued;
- All Judges are directed to conduct **Gagnon and Parole Violation hearings for those in custody** by video conferencing;
- **All MDJ Offices** will be directed to implement similar strategies to minimize exposure (staggered scheduling recommendations, money processing policies, etc.) to be coordinated through Court Administration;
- **DRO Establishment and Modification Conferences** will be held by telephone, provided that the parties comply with document presentation requirements prior

to the conference as required and in the manner determined by the Director of DRO;

- **Probation Officers and JPO** are authorized/encouraged to conduct supervisory visits with clients by video or phone.

By way of update, the following safety measures have been implemented throughout the Courthouse and MDJ Offices:

- County maintenance/housekeeping is sanitizing all door handles, light switches, counters, elevators, handrails etc. in the Courthouse and Courthouse Annex twice each day.
- Hand sanitizers have been ordered and will be placed in or near all courtrooms and meeting rooms.

The Court continues to work with the County to obtain additional supplies for each Court and Court-related office and is assured that those supplies are forthcoming.

These policies shall be updated and modified as circumstances warrant.

cc:

Board of Commissioners
Centre County Bar Association
AOPC Communications