

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF VENANGO COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

IN RE: COVID-19  
DECLARATION OF JUDICIAL EMERGENCY

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ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

AND NOW, this 17<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020, it is hereby effective immediately, and until further

notice, that the Court has adopted the following polices and/or restrictions:

- Exposure Control Policy (attached);
- Court Employees will not attend off-site conferences or trainings;
- Court events/meetings (as distinguished from court hearings) will be rescheduled or held virtually;
- Remote/telecommute work may be approved by an employee's Department Head/Judge on a case-by-case basis;
- Employees will stay home from work if they or someone who resides with them is exhibiting signs of the illness.

**IMPORTANTLY, THE COURT IS MAINTAINING ESSENTIAL JUDICIAL SERVICES AND WILL BE OPEN TO CONSIDERING OTHER EMERGENCY MEASURES AS THEY BECOME NECESSARY.**

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

The Court will limit the number of persons in chambers and other meeting/conference rooms to comply with social distancing recommendations.

In an effort to keep Court facilities in the 28<sup>th</sup> Judicial District safe to visitors and employees, the President Judge is ordering the following:

- **ACCESS TO THE COURTHOUSE IS STRICTLY LIMITED.** With regard to any party required to attend a scheduled court proceeding or who is visiting the Court facility to access a filing office, access to the Courthouse facility will be limited to parties and witnesses in that scheduled court proceeding or to the filer seeking access to a filing office as well as Courthouse employees.

- The Venango County Sheriff or deputy is authorized to inquire in this regard and to limit access to ensure compliance with this provision in an effort to decrease the possible spread of the virus.

### JURY SELECTION

The only scheduled jury selection proceeding during the period of this declared judicial emergency, namely, April 6, 2020, is hereby CANCELLED.

### MOTIONS

- Civil motions practice will be postponed to the extent that the Court is asking attorneys and parties to strictly limit motions and restrict the filing of civil motions to emergencies (if possible). Questions regarding motions can be directed to Jonathan Maddy (814) 432-9605 or Rebecca Whitman (814) 432-9605.
- Contested Motions will be argued by telephone or scheduled to a date certain.

### VIDEO CONFERENCING AND STAGGERED SCHEDULING

- Video conferencing shall be utilized for status conferences, Gagnon hearings, guilty pleas, bench warrants, sentencing, and all other judicial proceedings where possible.
- Scheduling of larger court lists will be staggered to avoid larger groups of litigants/attorneys in the courtrooms. Courtrooms may be reassigned to maximize social distance among participants.

### JUVENILE COURT

- Juvenile Court will hold emergency dependency hearings and shelter and detention hearings. All other matters will be held at the discretion of the President Judge.
- Juvenile Court will stagger scheduling and implement alternative scheduling options such as video and telephonic proceedings.
- Hearings will be scheduled affording greater intervals between cases to limit the number of persons in contact while awaiting hearings. CYS will make every effort to limit the number of people in groups or standing in the hallway of the second floor of the courthouse.

This Court is operating under conditions of a **Judicial Emergency Declaration** signed by the President Judge on March 16, 2020.

The Declaration of Judicial Emergency allows the Court to only function for the purpose of ESSENTIAL JUDICIAL SERVICES.

#### MDJ OFFICES

- All MDJ Offices are strongly encouraged to implement similar strategies to minimize exposure (staggered scheduling/videoconferencing for preliminary arraignments and other proceedings).

#### Domestic Relations

- DRO Establishment and Modification Conferences (only) will be held by telephone, provided that the parties comply with document presentation requirements prior to the conference as required and in the manner described by the Director of DRO.

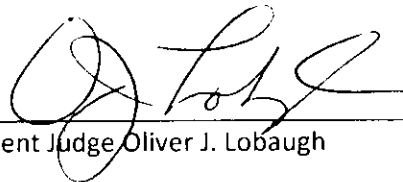
#### Problem Solving Court

- This Court will continue to convene the treatment team staffing sessions every other Tuesday morning at 9:00 a.m.

#### Court Programs

- Court programming, such as DUI school, Crossroads and the Victim Impact Panels, may be postponed or accomplished by telephone if possible. CRN evaluations shall be accomplished by telephone if possible.
- The Director of Court Supervision is authorized to temporarily suspend and/or modify the contact requirements for adult and juvenile offenders previously approved by the Court. The progress of the individual, time under supervision, risk score, drug test results and the like may be considered when implementing these modifications. Further, the timetable established for community service completion may also be suspended under this plan.

BY THE COURT:



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President Judge Oliver J. Lobaugh

28<sup>th</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA  
COURT OF COMMON PLEA OF VENANGO COUNTY

**EXPOSURE CONTROL POLICY**

**Objective**

To protect Venango County Court officials and employees from being exposed to health threatening conditions and, therefore, reducing the chance of exposing colleagues and members of the public.

**Scope of Policy**

The 28<sup>th</sup> Judicial District has established this policy for all employees, intern and volunteers who have been exposed to an Aerosol Transmissible Disease (“ATD”) or Aerosol Transmissible Pathogen (“ATP”). Diseases and pathogens which are to be considered aerosol transmissible pathogens or diseases can include, but are not limited to, COVID-19 and other coronaviruses, Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Tuberculosis, Varicella, Influenza, Meningitis, Pertussis, and other acute respiratory syndromes. Please note that this can include any other disease for which public health guidelines recommend airborne infection isolation.

**Procedures**

Any employee who believes they have been exposed to an ATR/ATD must report the potential exposure to their supervisor or Department Head/Judge immediately. Upon report of the incident, the supervisor or Department Head/Judge will provide Court Administration and Human Resources with details of the potential exposure. Reported incidents will be responded to on a case-by-case basis.

Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are required to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.1 degrees F or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever reducing or other symptom altering medicines (e.g. acetaminophen, ibuprofen, naproxen, Dayquill, cough suppressants, etc.). Signs and

symptoms generally include combinations of the following: coughing, sneezing, and other respiratory symptoms, fever, sweating, chills, muscle aches, weakness, and malaise.

Management reserves the right to require self-isolation of an employee in appropriate circumstances (*e.g.*, travel to a foreign country), even absent outward symptoms of an ATD or ATP.

The Center for Disease Control recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (*i.e.* cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately. Work areas should be thoroughly cleaned with an EPA approved disinfectant on a routine basis. Areas to consider are workstations, phones, fax machines, copiers, break rooms and other common objects or areas.

Employees may be asked to work remotely for a period of time after being exposed. This period will be in accordance with federal, state, and/or local health guidelines. The 27<sup>th</sup> Judicial District will adhere to the guidance of the public health authorities.

Employees may be required to provide a medical note releasing them to return to work.

Public health action may take place and this can include active monitoring or supervision of self-monitoring by public health authorizes, or the application of movement restrictions, including isolation and quarantine, when needed to prevent the possible spread of illness.

## EXPOSURE CONTROL POLICY - FAQ

1. Is Corona Virus one of the diseases covered under this policy?

Yes. Based on available information, it is a flu-like virus.

2. How does an employee know if they have been exposed to an aerosol transmissible disease?

Generally, it will be based on an awareness of being close to or around a person or persons who is/are exhibiting overt signs of illness such as frequent coughing, sneezing, etc. Someone may advise an employee that they have been in close proximity to or that he or she has been diagnosed with a respiratory illness. In addition, the employee may be contacted by a public health official about possible exposure to the Coronavirus.

3. What if the employee does not want to return home from work?

Managers and supervisors should contact the Court Administrator for assistance and direction concerning an employee's refusal to follow the policy and return home.

4. Does the employee have to use a sick day?

We encourage departments to have employees work from home if possible. This will provide continuity of county services and not require employees to use their benefits. If they cannot work from home, the employee should utilize any available sick leave they have accrued.

5. If the employee does not have any sick days, do they have to use vacation or personal days?

Yes. If the employee does not have any or insufficient sick leave, he or she should then utilize accrued vacation or personal days as needed.

6. What if the employee has no available time to use?

The Department Head/Judge should consult with the Court Administrator. Lack of available time will not impede sending an employee home.

7. I believe I have an employee who is feigning illness to stay at home from work. What do I do?