

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

CIVIL DIVISION

IN RE: 27<sup>TH</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT )  
DECLARATION OF JUDICIAL ) Nos. 2020-1  
EMERGENCY ) 24 W.M. 2020

FILED

JUL - 1 2020

L. H. HOUGH  
PROTHONOTARY

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

AND NOW, this 1<sup>st</sup> day of July, 2020, the Court declared a judicial emergency in the 27<sup>th</sup> Judicial District of Pennsylvania, effective March 16, 2020, and having previously extended the local judicial emergency through July 2, 2020, the Court **AUTHORIZES** a renewed, limited declaration of emergency to safeguard the health and safety of court personnel, court users, and members of the public through the exercise of emergency powers under Pennsylvania Rule of Judicial Administration 1952(B)(2). It is hereby **ORDERED** and **DECREED** as follows:

1. The local judicial emergency for Washington County shall be extended through September 7, 2020.
2. All judicial officers shall perform their duties in the following manner:
  - a. Utilize advanced communications technology, when practicable, to reduce in-person appearances for proceedings;
  - b. Stagger court appearances (high-volume dockets should be coordinated with the Court Administrator's office);
  - c. Limit meetings, conferences, and other gatherings to essential participants; and
  - d. Liberally grant requests for continuances.
3. Hearings requiring personal appearances will be scheduled at the discretion of the presiding judicial officer.
4. Statewide rules that restrict, directly or indirectly, the use of advanced communication technologies are **SUSPENDED** for the duration of the judicial emergency. Proceedings

involving incarcerated individuals will be scheduled via videoconference to avoid transportation by a deputy sheriff or constable. If the individual has a constitutional or statutory right to appear in person and does not consent to a video appearance, then the matter will be continued and rescheduled by the judicial officer.

5. All individuals entering a judicial facility **SHALL** comply with the following, or be denied access and/or removed:

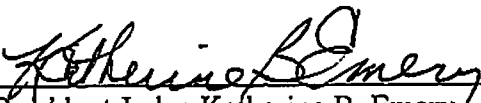
- a. Submit to a temperature check and screening. No individual may enter a judicial facility with a fever of over 100.0°, or if exposure to or symptoms of COVID-19 are indicated;
- b. Wear an appropriate mask or face covering that fits snugly around the face and leaves unexposed the nose and mouth of the individual, unless the individual has a documented medical condition or is 3 years of age or younger. It is specifically directed that staff shall wear a mask or face covering in all common areas, if interacting with a member of the public, or in situations where social distancing is not possible.
- c. A presiding judicial officer may permit an individual to remove a mask to take testimony or where the presence of a mask would affect the ability to judge credibility, provided that the requirements for social distancing are followed; and
- d. Comply with social distancing guidelines, as well as any signage posted in or on judicial facilities or instructions from a judge, judicial officer, the district court administrator, deputy sheriff, constable at a magisterial district court, or court employee. Elected officials of court-related offices are responsible for establishing and maintaining procedures within their respective offices.

6. Magisterial District Courts are specifically authorized to:

- a. Modify their hours of operation, including times when in-person payments and filings may be accepted in order to permit for screening of the public; provided however, that any modification must be submitted to the District Court Administrator for approval by the President Judge. A notice of any modification of hours shall be posted on the door of the affected magisterial district court and displayed at [www.washingtoncourts.us](http://www.washingtoncourts.us).
  - b. Use a constable to provide security and conduct COVID-19 screening. It is preferred, but not necessary, that the constable be certified to carry a firearm by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. The District Court Administrator is authorized to set the rate of pay for constables providing security and COVID-19 screening services.
7. Regular motions court practice may resume at the discretion of the presiding common pleas judge. A copy of any modified motions court procedures will be accessible at [www.washingtoncourts.us](http://www.washingtoncourts.us).
8. Quasi-judicial officers shall conduct hearings and conferences, whenever practicable, using advanced communications technology.
9. Statewide rules pertaining to the rule-based right of criminal defendants to a prompt trial continue to be suspended for the duration of the judicial emergency due to the limited availability of jury trials. Said delays shall be considered court delays and shall constitute excludable time for purposes of the application of Rule 600, subject to constitutional limitations.
10. The Sheriff of Washington County, or his designee, is authorized to enforce this Order.
11. The District Court Administrator is directed to post a copy of this Order on all entry doors of the Washington County Courthouse and all magisterial district courts, and to post a copy

on the Court's website at [www.washingtoncourts.us](http://www.washingtoncourts.us). A copy of this Order shall also be transmitted to the Washington County Bar Association for distribution to its members.

BY THE COURT:

  
\_\_\_\_\_, P.J.  
President Judge Katherine B. Emery