



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

TO: All President Judges
All District Court Administrators

FROM: Geoff Moulton ^{GM}
Court Administrator of Pennsylvania

DATE: March 4, 2020

RE: Public Health – Coronavirus (COVID-19)

On January 31, 2020, all judges received the Pennsylvania Public Health Law Bench Book and an update pertaining to coronavirus (COVID-19). New information about the spread of coronavirus is now in the news daily. Every day the number of cases is updated. Currently over 85,000 worldwide, and just over 100 in the United States.

In times of heightened worry over a novel illness, it is important to have reliable, science-based sources of information. In Pennsylvania, a primary source of information is the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH).

The 2019 coronavirus is a new virus that causes respiratory illness similar to influenza. It can spread from person-to-person. There is not yet a vaccine against coronavirus, but information about how the virus is spread, information about how to protect yourself, and answers to frequently asked questions can be found on the DOH website, at: <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>. Updates from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

The DOH notes that symptoms of coronavirus may include fever, a cough, and shortness of breath. The symptoms may appear between 2 and 14 days after exposure. Reported illnesses have ranged from people with little to no symptoms to people being severely ill, and in some cases dying.

The DOH advises coronaviruses spread just like the flu or a cold:

- Through the air by coughing or sneezing;
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands;
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it.

The DOH is advising the public to be prepared by taking simple preventative measures similar to those for the regular flu:

- Cover coughs and sneezes with your elbow
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects
- Stay home if you are sick
- Avoid contact with others who are sick.

Cleaning staff in all court facilities should be advised to utilize cleaning agents effective for killing viruses on surfaces in an effort to reduce and/or eliminate exposure.

The DOH website is updated regularly. In addition to the DOH and the CDC, your local public health department should be a valuable resource.

With regard to courthouse operations in a public health emergency, your judicial district continuity of operations plan (COOP) contains relevant information should a public health emergency develop. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with the relevant provisions of your COOP in the event that courthouse operations are affected, as well as review and discuss your COOP with county partners.

While this remains an emerging situation, AOPC continues to monitor developments at the state and national level. Please feel free to share the information provided in this memo with court personnel.

For information and the most current updates on COVID-19, visit the [PA Department of Health](#) website. For questions related to leave policies and medical benefits, judges and state-level employees should contact AOPC/HR at 717-231-3309 or human.resources@pacourts.us. County-level employees may wish to contact their individual county HR departments.