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UNION COUNTY, PA
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PROTHONOTARY
CLERK OF COURTS

IN RE: : IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION ORDER : OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
: OF PENNSYLVANIA
DECLARATION OF JUDICIAL : UNION COUNTY BRANCH
EMERGENCY MODIFICATION OF : NO. AD-8-2020
PROCEDURES :

ORDER

AND NOW, November 25, 2020, pursuant to Order of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania dated May 27, 2020, and in light of ongoing public health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the President Judge of the 17th Judicial District hereby exercises the power granted by the Supreme Court and ORDERS that a judicial emergency exists in the 17th Judicial District and will continue until further Order of court. The following provisions shall apply throughout the judicial emergency (unless otherwise stated below) subject to state and federal constitutional requirements and any subsequent order by the Supreme Court:

1. In-Person court proceedings and in-person access to proceedings will be limited in order to safeguard the health and safety of court personnel, court users, and members of the public.
2. The following statewide rules are suspended:

- a. Rules that restrict, directly or indirectly, the use of advanced communication technologies¹; and
 - b. Rules pertaining to the rule-based right of criminal defendants to a prompt trial, including Pa.R.Crim.P. 600.
3. To the extent possible, the Courts will decide matters on the papers, and conduct proceedings utilizing advanced communication technology to order to limit in-person contact.
 4. Incarcerated defendants will participate by advanced communication technology unless extenuating circumstances necessitate the presiding Judge to authorize transport.
 5. The court strongly recommends that documents be filed via U.S. Mail with the office of the Prothonotary and Clerk of Courts and/or the Register and Recorder, whichever the appropriate filing office is. The document and filing fee (check or money order) must be in a closed envelope addressed to the filing office and a self-addressed, prepaid envelope for a return of a receipt for payment of filing fees and a time-stamped copy of the document. **If proper payment is not included, the document will be returned to the sender unfiled.**

¹ The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania's "Second Supplemental Order" dated April 1, 2020, defines "advanced communication technology" as including but not limited to systems providing for two-way or simultaneous communication of image and sound; closed-circuit television; telephone and facsimile equipment; and electronic mail.

6. The court strongly encourages that documents be filed with the Magisterial District Courts via U.S. Mail to the applicable District Court office and payments for fines/costs/restitutions be made via U.S. mail or online at <https://ujportal.pacourts.us/PayOnline.aspx>.
7. Safety measures including, but not limited to, the following will be implemented with in-person proceedings until further notice:
 - a. Start times will be staggered and the time between proceedings will be increased in order to minimize person-to-person contact;
 - b. Only necessary participants will be allowed entry to courtrooms and hearing room in order to minimize person-to-person contact;
 - c. Participants, including, but not limited to litigants, defendants, attorneys, and witnesses will wear a facemask and practice physical distancing in all areas of the Courts, including, but not limited to the courtroom and waiting areas, unless the presiding Judge authorizes otherwise;
 - d. Participants will utilize the hand sanitizers located in common areas and waiting rooms; and
 - e. High-touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected as practicable throughout the day, and all surfaces will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after hours.

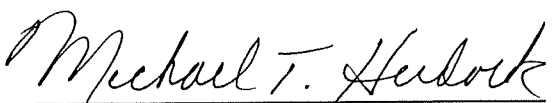
8. All employees and court visitors including, but not limited to, contractors and vendors will wear a face mask and practice physical distancing until further notice.
9. Any individual with a scheduled court event who is denied entry shall contact the respective Court office via telephone as soon as possible for further instruction. Court Administration can be reached at 570-524-8736.
10. Court employees may attend off-site conferences and trainings at the discretion of their supervisor.
11. Individuals on supervision will NOT report to the Adult Probation Office unless specifically directed to do so. Adult probation will supervise individuals in the field or via advanced communications technology until further notice. Those individuals under supervision who have questions should contact their assigned probation officer.
12. Juveniles on supervision will NOT report to the Juvenile Probation Office unless specifically directed to do so. Those juveniles under supervision who have questions should contact their assigned probation officer.
13. The Domestic Relations Office will take measures to limit the number of individuals reporting to its office until further notice. Those with questions should contact the Domestic Relations Office for additional information. The Domestic Relations Office can be reached at 570-524-8661.
14. All magisterial District Court offices are encouraged to implement similar strategies to minimize exposure to themselves and the public.

15. These guidelines are fluid and are continually subject to change as additional information becomes available. Questions or concerns should be directed to the Office of the District Court Administrator at 570-837-4344 or to the applicable Magisterial District Court as below:
 - a. Magisterial District Judge Jeffrey Rowe (17-3-01): 570-524-8656
 - b. Magisterial District Judge Jeffrey Mensch (17-3-02) 570-966-2886
16. Any person who believes that they are being unjustly denied access to the Courts within the 17th Judicial District of Pennsylvania may immediately:
 - a. Contact Kelly J. Heeter, District Court Administrator of the 17th Judicial District of Pennsylvania by telephone at 570-837-4344 or email at kheeter@snydercounty.org to address being deprived of access to the Courts of the 17th Judicial District; and/or
 - b. File a petition with the Court of Common Pleas at the above captioned docket number to address being deprived of the access to the Courts within the 17th Judicial District.
17. The exclusive purpose of this Order of Court is to promote and protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public, county, and court employees, and users of the 17th Judicial District/Union County Court of Common Pleas and Snyder County Court of Common Pleas, Magisterial District Courts, Probation, and the Domestic Relations Office of the 17th Judicial District.
18. A copy of this Order shall be prominently posted on the main entry of the Union County Courthouse, and the offices of the Magisterial District Judges Jeffrey Rowe (Lewisburg, PA), and Jeffrey Mensch (Mifflinburg, PA).

19. All prior orders of this court that pertain to a judicial emergency in the 17th Judicial District are VACATED.

BY THE COURT:

Date: 11-25-20


MICHAEL T. HUDOCK, P.J.

cc: District Attorney
Union County Commissioners
Probation Department
Domestic Relations
Union County Sheriff
SC-UC Bar Association
Union County Bar Association
Magisterial Judge Jeffrey Mensch
Magisterial Judge Jeffrey Rowe
District Court Administrator to Distribute to Court Administration
Louise O. Knight, Senior Judge
Public Defender
Assessment
Prothonotary
Register/Recorder
Treasurer