



## **ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS**

THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA

**RONALD N. FICARROTTA**  
CHIEF JUDGE

**GINA JUSTICE**  
COURT ADMINISTRATOR

### **COVID-19 Advisory: Limited Courthouse Access**

**March 17, 2020**

Chief Judge Ronald Ficarrotta of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit has implemented the following directives to address the impact of COVID-19 in our community. “Mission critical events” and “essential court functions” will be maintained while reducing the number of people coming into our Hillsborough County courthouse facilities.

#### **Civil, Family Law, & Probate Proceedings**

Until further notice, except as provided below, all future proceedings in all civil, family or probate must be conducted by either teleconference, including those with witness testimony, or by written submission of memorandum. The chief justice’s emergency procedures administrative order (AOSC20-13) already allows for this and we need to follow this procedure immediately. If parties or their counsel in civil, family or probate do not wish to conduct their proceedings by telephone or do not have the technical capacity to do so, you should continue the proceeding until at least April 20, 2020.

#### **Civil Traffic**

Civil traffic dockets will be cancelled and rescheduled to a date after April 20, 2020.

#### **Civil Process - Enforceable & Non-Enforceable Orders**

The Sheriff of Hillsborough County is hereby authorized to stay the execution of the following orders until a date after April 20, 2020: writs of possession, ex parte orders, injunctions, child pick up orders, levies, replevins, 5-day evictions, writs of garnishments, regular summonses / legal documents, mental health documents (notices of hearings and summonses / subpoenas), criminal papers (juvenile criminal summonses that are served on the juvenile and their parent for a crime and criminal traffic cases, and out-of-county summonses for the same), paid papers (divorce

papers, notices of hearings / motions), Department of Revenue paperwork, out-of-state orders, in-county and out-of-county tax deeds, certain felony subpoenas from the State Attorney's Office, and certain indigent services.

### **Criminal, Juvenile, & Mental Health Proceedings**

Criminal, juvenile, and mental health proceedings have different considerations or complicating factors but effective immediately, no inmate will be brought over to the courthouse facilities from the jails. Other than the mission critical events and essential court functions listed below, all non-emergency criminal proceedings should be rescheduled to a date after April 20, 2020.

### **Mission Critical Events & Essential Court Functions**

The following mission critical events and essential court functions are the only proceedings in which in-person hearings may be held:

#### **Criminal**

- First appearance hearings (via video proceedings);
- Bond reduction hearings (via video proceedings);
- Fugitive warrants (via video proceedings);
- Misdemeanor arraignments (via video proceedings);
- Violation of probation hearings in felony cases (to be scheduled via video proceedings);
- Applications for execution of all warrants; and
- Review of emergency motions in Circuit Criminal Division or County Criminal Division and any necessary hearings (via video proceedings);

#### **Dependency**

- Juvenile shelter hearings; and
- Review of emergency motions in the Dependency Division and any necessary hearings, including any matters that must be heard or adjudicated prior to a child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

#### **Delinquency**

- Juvenile detention hearings; and
- Review of emergency motions in the Delinquency Division and any necessary hearings.

#### **Mental Health**

- Risk protection order hearings;
- Review of Baker Act petitions and initial hearings;
- Review of Marchman Act petitions and initial hearings;
- Review of petitions for Adult Protective Services; and
- Review of emergency motions in the Mental Health Division and any necessary hearings.

### **Guardianship**

- Review of petitions for emergency medical authorizations; and
- Review of emergency temporary guardianship petitions and any necessary hearings.

### **Family Law**

- Review of protective injunction petitions and return hearings;
- Child support instanters;
- Hearings on petitions seeking judicial waiver of parental notification of abortion; and
- Review of emergency motions in Family Law Division and any necessary hearings.

### **Civil**

- Violation of quarantine or isolation orders (§381.00315(1)(c)4., Fla. Stat.) ;
- Violation of orders to limit travel (§ 252.36(5), Fla. Stat.);
- Violations of orders to close public or private buildings (§381.00315(4), Fla. Stat.);
- Habeas corpus petitions (§§381.00315(4) and 381.0012, Fla. Stat.);
- Mandatory vaccinations (§381.00315(1)(c)4., Fla. Stat.); and
- Review of emergency motions in Circuit Civil Division or County Civil Division and any necessary hearings.

Under no circumstances will any hearing or court proceeding be conducted in chambers. Any mission critical event or essential court function listed above must be conducted in a courtroom; however, by agreement of the parties and consent of the presiding judge, the matter may be conducted telephonically or by audiovisual device.

### **“Social Distancing”**

Everyone should maintain at least a 6-foot “social distance” from each other at all times. This includes judges, judicial assistants, court staff, bailiffs and visitors. People who show no sign of being sick can be contagious and unknowingly transmit the virus. Close personal interaction is thought to be the method of transmission in nearly all cases and it does not require actual physical contact.

### **Conclusion**

These are trying times for our legal community, our courthouse community, our community at large, our state, and our nation. I appreciate your cooperation as we respond to this pandemic.