



COUNTY COURT
DUVAL COUNTY

GARY P. FLOWER
COUNTY JUDGE

DUVAL COUNTY COURTHOUSE
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202
(904) 255-1354

**Amended 4th Circuit County Court Guidelines and Protocols during the
COVID-19 Pandemic**

All of the Duval County Courts are concerned about the community and all Judges and court staff as well as litigants safety.

On Friday, March 13, 2020, the Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice Charles Canady issued Administrative Order AOSC 20-12 suspending legal time limits, Grand Jury Proceedings, Jury Selection Proceedings, and Jury Trials beginning Monday, March 16, 2020, for a period of two weeks ending on March 30, 2020. In addition, the Administrative Order suspends all rules of procedure, Court Orders and Opinions that formerly limited or prohibited the use of communication equipment for remote proceedings. In addition, the Duval County Courts are enacting changes to protect access to justice while balancing health and public welfare. To the extent possible, the Courts and its justice partners will work to minimize the personal appearance of persons in the courtroom.

Additionally on March 17, 2020, Judge Mark Mahon entered Administrative Order 2020-6 RE: Suspension of Circuit and County Jury Trials Due To The Coronavirus Public Health Emergency. The order states in part that: As of March 17, 2020, "All Circuit and County Court Jury Trials are suspended through May 1, 2020."

NO INMATES WILL BE TRANSPORTED TO THE COURTHOUSE EXCEPT AS SPECIFICALLY AUTHORIZED.

PERSONS WHO DO NOT HAVE BUSINESS IN THE COURT FACILITIES ARE REQUESTED TO REFRAIN FROM COMING INTO THE BUILDING.

For Tuesday, March 17, 2020, County State Attorneys, Public Defenders, and private counsel should come to pre-trials as scheduled or until such time as the division Judge closes their courtroom.

For the next two weeks, which may be extended if needed or upon coordination with Chief Judge Mark Mahon, all criminal and civil hearings will be addressed as follows:

A. Misdemeanor Criminal

1. First Appearances will be held every day at the normal time by audio/video communication.
2. All out of custody misdemeanor arraignment dates during this time will be rescheduled to a date at least fifteen (15) days out. (See attached)
3. All misdemeanor criminal trials are suspended from March 16th through March 30th. All criminal pre-trial hearings are suspended from March 17, 2020 through March 30, 2020. Any emergency hearings will be scheduled as needed at the direction of each individual division Judge.

B. Traffic

1. All out of custody criminal traffic arraignment dates during this time will be rescheduled to a date at least thirty (30) days out.
2. All misdemeanor criminal traffic trials as well as civil traffic trials are suspended for the next two weeks, March 16, 2020 through March 30, 2020.

C. Civil Hearings

1. In civil matters, to the extent possible, hearings and trials will be conducted remotely (via telephone or video). This includes county civil, evictions, small claims matters and claims of exemption. Litigants represented by an attorney with questions about a hearing on a civil matter should reach out to their attorney. Litigants who are self-represented should call the presiding Judge's office. A judicial directory is available at www.jud4.org.
2. All small claims pretrial hearings set during this time will be rescheduled to a date at least thirty (30) days out.
 - A. Small Claims Pre-trials presently scheduled for Thursday, March 19, 2020 shall be rescheduled for April 28, 2020 at 1:30 p.m. and 2:15 p.m. in the Jury Assembly Room, 2nd Floor at the Duval County Courthouse, 501 West Adams Street, Jacksonville, FL 32202.
 - B. Small Claims Pre-trials presently scheduled for Thursday, March 26, 2020 shall be rescheduled for May 5, 2020 at 1:30 p.m. and 2:15 p.m. in the Jury Assembly Room, 2nd Floor at the Duval County Courthouse, 501 West Adams Street, Jacksonville, FL 32202.
3. Setting cases for trial will be done only through e-mail. Any submissions or evidence that parties would like the Court to consider should be sent as an attachment to an e-mail at least three (3) business days before the hearing. Any request to provide physical documents or evidence should be put in writing and

sent to the Judge. Any party who believes that an in-person hearing is necessary may file a request to the Judge. Those requests will be considered on a case by case basis.

We encourage all parties to confer on their upcoming hearings. Discuss matters that can be resolved without the need for a hearing.

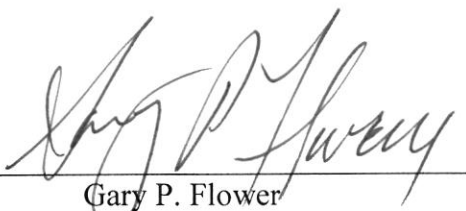
Individual Judges may decide to continue evidentiary hearings and non-jury trials that are not time sensitive. In that event, Court staff will contact counsel and an order continuing the hearing will be entered. Any person who has a valid basis for requesting a continuance of an evidentiary hearing may file a motion to continue. The motion shall include a statement of the position of opposing parties concerning the request.

Please continue to visit the website www.jud4.org and/or contact the Clerk's Office at (904) 255-2000 or visit www.duvalclerk.com for updates on continued criminal and civil court dates.

Attorneys or *pro se* litigants who have filed eviction proceedings in the County Court shall contact the individual division Judicial Assistants to request telephonic hearing times.

All claims of exemption between the period of March 17, 2020 through March 30, 2020 shall be heard by the individual Judges if available and if not, by the designated County Duty Judge. Litigants and attorneys shall contact the individual division to set those matters.

Civil Traffic Magistrates are permitted to accept e-mailed pleas by counsel. Pursuant to Rule 6.340(a), FLA.R.Traf.Ct.



Gary P. Flower
Administrative County Court Judge