

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 16TH
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF THE STATE OF
FLORIDA IN AND FOR MONROE COUNTY

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 2.079

IN RE: COVID-19 EMERGENCY
PROCEDURES

WHEREAS, the Florida State Courts System continues to monitor and proactively address the effects on court operations of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), a severe acute respiratory transmission; and

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State of Florida has declared that a state emergency exists, the Surgeon General and the State Health Officer have declared a public health emergency exists and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Florida Department of Health and the Florida Department of Management Services have publish after-travel health precaution information; and

WHEREAS, the health, safety, and well-being of courthouse visitors, court employees and judicial officers are a high priority for the Florida State Courts System; and

WHEREAS, AOSC20-13 authorizes the Chief Judges of the circuit and district courts to continue ongoing efforts to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on the courts and court participants and to prepare to activate and implement continuity of operations (COOP) plans to address the public health emergency; and

WHEREAS, AOSC20-15 directs the chief judge of each judicial circuit to cancel or postpone court proceedings other than essential proceedings and proceedings critical to the state of emergency and public health emergency; and

WHEREAS, AOSC20-23 recognizes a chief judge's authority to conduct court business or to approve additional court proceedings or events (except for grand jury proceedings, jury selection proceedings and criminal and civil jury trials, all of which are suspended) that are required in the interest of justice, if doing so is consistent with protecting the health of the participants and the public health; and

WHEREAS, Monroe County Emergency Management Emergency Directive advises to follow the CDC's advice warning against public gatherings of more than 10 people in any one location; and

WHEREAS, it is the policy of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit to implement all reasonable and appropriate measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and assure public safety,

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED AND ADJUDGED:

1. The 16th Judicial Circuit shall continue to conduct “mission critical” court proceedings as defined below:
 - a. First Appearances;
 - b. Bond Hearings;
 - c. Criminal Arraignments; as necessary;
 - d. Juvenile Detention Hearings;
 - e. Juvenile Shelter Hearings;
 - f. Domestic Violence, repeat violence, sexual violence, dating violence and stalking injunctions, as well as all chapter 39 injunctions;
 - g. Risk Protection orders;
 - h. Marchman Acts;
 - i. Baker Acts;
 - j. Family law (including juvenile) cases where the imminent safety of children is an issue;
 - k. Vulnerable adult injunctions;
 - l. Emergency incapacity petitions and appointment of guardians;
 - m. Proceedings involving requests for “do not resuscitate” orders;
 - n. Adult Protective Service Act proceedings;
 - o. Requests for search warrants and arrest warrants;
 - p. Violations of quarantine or isolation orders;
 - q. Violations of orders to limit travel;
 - r. Violations of orders to close public or private buildings;
 - s. Seizure of bodily fluids;
 - t. Mandatory vaccinations proceedings;
 - u. Enforcement of curfew orders;
 - v. Extraordinary writs;
 - w. Any other “emergency” proceedings or hearings authorized by the Chief Judge, which includes jail pleas and admissions by incarcerated defendants via video.
2. “Mission critical” proceedings may be conducted through in-person hearings during which all methods feasible to minimize the risk of COVID-19 exposure to individuals involved in the proceedings or the general public shall be employed.
3. The following proceedings may be conducted within the 16th Judicial Circuit, but only remotely using telephonic or other electronic means available, without the necessity of in-person court appearances:
 - a. Dependency hearings, other than trials;
 - b. Family law hearings, other than trials;

- c. Civil hearings in both Circuit and County court, other than evidentiary hearings and trials.
4. No proceedings, or other court events, other than those designated “mission critical” may be conducted through in-person hearings.
5. Any person, regardless of status, who is exhibiting symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection; or any person who has traveled internationally or has been in contact with another person who is suffering from the effects of the COVID-19 virus, is prohibited from entering any court facility.
6. Entry to court facilities to participate in “mission critical” hearings as defined in Section 1 above will be limited to attorneys, litigants, witnesses, and essential personnel necessary to conduct the critical mission of the court.
7. First Appearances will continue to be held via video from the Freeman Justice Center, the Marathon Courthouse and the Plantation Key Courthouse to the Monroe County Detention Centers.
8. Criminal Arraignments will continue to be held in all three courthouse locations for incarcerated Felony and Misdemeanor defendants only via video from the jails. All arraignment dates for out of custody defendants will be rescheduled.
9. Requests for Juvenile Shelter Hearings and Juvenile Detention Hearings shall be made with the presiding judge during normal working hours or the duty judge on nights and weekends.
10. Requests for temporary injunctions shall be made with the presiding judge during normal working hours or the duty judge on nights and weekends. Injunction hearings relating to the safety of an individual shall take place in person or by remote means at dates and times designated by the presiding judges.
11. All Risk Protection Orders hearings shall take place in person or by telephonic means at dates and times designated by the presiding judges.
12. Requests for Baker Act and Marchman Act hearings shall be made with the presiding judges.
13. Family and Dependency emergencies where imminent harm to a child is an issue shall be presented to the presiding judge and will be considered/heard as determined by the presiding judge in person or via remote means.
14. Requests for search and arrest warrants will be considered during normal working hours by the day duty judge at each courthouse location and on nights and weekends by the duty judge.

15. All requests for emergency mission critical civil actions shall be presented to the presiding circuit civil judge in each courthouse location during normal working hours. Hearings on these matters shall be conducted via remote means or in person as determined by the presiding judge.
16. Any judge, who in his/her judgment feels the need to conduct a hearing outside the parameters of this Order shall request permission to do so from the Chief Judge.
17. No inmate housed in any jail facility is to be transported to any court facility in the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit absent a written order from the Chief Judge.
18. All court proceedings not specifically mentioned herein that are scheduled to take place in any facility in the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit are hereby postponed and are to be rescheduled by the parties or the court.
19. All collateral uses of the courthouse facilities for depositions, mediations, meetings, etc. are hereby canceled.
20. The Freeman Justice Center, Plantation Key Courthouse and Marathon Courthouse are closed to the general public, with the exception of those persons attending court for mission-critical proceedings as described herein, as well as persons needing to conduct business with the Clerk of Court and the State Attorney's Office at the Plantation Key Government Center.
21. This ORDER takes effect April 18, 2020 and remains in effect through May 29, 2020, unless it is extended or modified by further order of the Chief Judge. Administrative Order 2.077 is amended in its entirety and rescinded effective 11:59 pm, April 17, 2020.

DONE AND ORDERED at Key West, Monroe County, Florida this 14th day of April, 2020.



Mark H. Jones
Chief Judge