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CLERK OF COURTS

**IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS  
GENERAL, CRIMINAL AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISIONS  
HANCOCK COUNTY, OHIO**

**In re: Temporary Orders Necessitated  
By the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) Public  
Health Emergency and State of  
Emergency in the Unites States and  
State of Ohio**

**March 16, 2020**

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The Judges of the Hancock County Court of Common Pleas, General, Criminal and Domestic Relations Divisions (Hancock County Common Pleas Court), make the following Findings of Fact:

1. On March 9, 2020 Ohio Governor Mike DeWine issued Executive Order 2020-01D “Declaring a State of Emergency” in response to the growing COVID-19 public health crisis.
2. On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 to be a global “pandemic” requiring “urgent and aggressive action” to control the spread of the virus.
3. On March 12, 2020 the State of Ohio Director of Public Health issued a ban on “mass gatherings” and Ohio Governor Mike DeWine ordered the closure of schools in the State of Ohio to control the spread of the virus.
4. On March 13, 2020 President of the United States Donald Trump declared a National Emergency pursuant to the Stafford Act as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.
5. On March 15, 2020 the State of Ohio Director of Health issued orders limiting access to Ohio’s jails to control the spread of the virus.

6. Various Federal, State and Local Health Agencies continue to urge limitations on public interactions in an effort to control the spread of the virus from person to person.
7. Temporary modification of the current rules, practices and procedures of the Hancock County Common Pleas Court are necessary in order to ensure the orderly and efficient functioning of the Court, to ensure that all essential functions of the Court are carried out, and to ensure the health and safety of the staff, parties, attorneys and general public.

Based upon these Findings of Fact, the Hancock County Common Pleas Court has developed and will continue to develop a continuum of flexible responses in response to this public health emergency. The continuum of responses is intended to protect health, to maintain essential court functions, and to continue to protect the rights of all individuals subject to the authority of the Court.

**THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that:**

1. All Local Rules of this Court may be temporarily adapted, modified or suspended to allow Court flexibility, within Constitutional limits, in response to the public health emergency.
2. The security policies and procedures of the Court may be temporarily amended or supplemented to protect public health safety while maintaining essential court functions.
3. The Court's Employee Handbook provisions may be temporarily adjusted to maintain essential court operations and functions.
4. The Court authorizes, on a case-by-case basis unless otherwise approved, the use of audiovisual devices and technologies for Court actions and proceedings.
5. The public health emergency may be considered to be a finding of good cause for any purposes, including continuances deemed necessary by assigned Judges, on a case-by-case basis.

6. The Court will have the lawful authority, within constitutional limits, to do and direct to be done all things necessary to ensure the orderly and efficient administration of justice for the duration of the declared public health emergency and such time after the declaration is ended deemed necessary by this Court.
7. The Court may make such modifications and authorizations in any manner deemed reasonable by the Court and need not follow formal processes for modification of Rules of Court and Rules of Procedure, and shall provide notification of any modifications and authorizations in such manner as may be deemed reasonable by this Court, including but not limited to posting same to the website maintained by the Court or Clerk of Courts, posting same in public spaces of the Hancock County Courthouse, and by providing same to parties or members of the Bar by mail or email.
8. This Order shall remain in full force and effect until such time as same is modified or rescinded by the undersigned Judges.



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HON. REGINALD J. ROUTSON  
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE



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HON. JONATHAN P. STARN  
PRESIDING JUDGE

**THE CLERK OF COURTS SHALL CAUSE A COPY OF THIS ORDER TO BE POSTED IN A CONSPICUOUS LOCATION IN THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF COURTS AND SHALL PLACE A COPY IN THE MAIL DRAWERS OF ALL ATTORNEYS LOCATED IN THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF COURTS.**

HANCOCK COUNTY, OHIO  
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CLERK OF COURTS

**Hancock County Common Pleas Court  
Temporary Policies and Procedures in Response to Covid-19  
(Coronavirus) Public Health Crisis**

*All parties and attorneys are encouraged to exercise good health practices as recommended by the Director of Health and the local Board of Health when it comes to appearing for Court hearings. If you are sick, have been sick, or are concerned that you may have been exposed to the Covid-19 virus (or to someone that may have been exposed to the virus), PLEASE CONTACT THE COURT and opposing counsel to explore options on a case-by-case basis.*

***All Cases:***

- For all hearings, the Court shall be notified prior to the scheduled hearing if any of the following apply to any party, attorney or witness: has travelled outside of the United States to a country with travel restrictions designated as Level 2 or higher by the U.S. Department of State and returned to the United States within the 21 days prior to the scheduled hearing; has been exposed to the Covid-19 virus or anyone infected with the Covid-19 virus within the 21 days prior to the scheduled hearing; or has been quarantined, isolated or otherwise restricted by any health department, director of health, or similar entity. These hearings will be rescheduled by the Court for good cause.

***Civil Cases (including Domestic Relations, Foreclosures and Workers Compensation):***

- All pre-trials scheduled to occur on or before May 31, 2020 that are not designated as a final pre-trial, unless otherwise specifically ordered by the Judge or Magistrate handling the case, shall be conducted by telephone (conference call). Unless otherwise ordered or agreed to by all parties, the Plaintiff shall be responsible for initiating all pre-trial conference calls. If a 'call-in' or 'access' number is required, it shall be provided to all parties and the court at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled pre-trial. The parties, unless appearing *pro se* or otherwise approved by the Court in advance, shall NOT participate in the telephone pre-trial, but shall be available to counsel either in person (but not listening in on the pre-trial) or by telephone.

- All final pre-trials that are scheduled to occur on or before May 31, 2020, if a trial date has already been scheduled, will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
- All mediations currently scheduled with the Court's Mediators to occur on or before May 31, 2020 are continued and shall be rescheduled.
- All jury trials currently scheduled to commence on or before May 31, 2020 will be reviewed by the Court, and may be continued and rescheduled by the Court unless good cause is shown as to why a continuance would result in undue hardship or a miscarriage of justice.
- All HOPE and PACT classes that are currently scheduled to occur on or before May 31, 2020 are cancelled. The Court will be reviewing whether or not to substitute an appropriate on-line equivalent. If no on-line equivalent is provided the Court will consider waiving the requirement on a case-by-case basis.

#### ***Criminal Cases:***

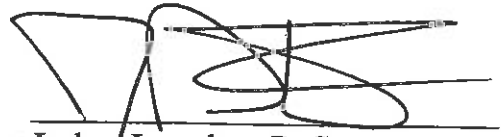
- All first and second pre-trials that are scheduled to occur on or before May 31, 2020 and that are not scheduled to occur with the Judge assigned to the case shall be held by telephone between defense counsel and the prosecuting attorney assigned to the case on or before the scheduled date and time. The prosecuting attorney shall initiate the calls for all pre-trials. Defense counsel shall, prior to the pre-trial occurring, have had appropriate contact with their client and shall have reviewed with the defendant all discovery provided by the State of Ohio up to that time. Defense counsel shall either sign the pre-trial form or otherwise approve the form within 24 hours of the pre-trial occurring. The State of Ohio shall, within 48 hours of the scheduled date/time for the pre-trial, submit the appropriate pre-trial form to the Court.
- All jury trials scheduled to begin on or before May 31, 2020 will be reviewed by the Court, and may be continued and rescheduled by the Court if BOTH of the following are present: the Defendant is not currently incarcerated in the case scheduled for trial (as opposed to someone incarcerated on an unrelated matter), and a time waiver has been previously executed and not revoked.

- For all pre-trials with the Court scheduled to occur on or before May 31, 2020 in cases where the Defendant is currently incarcerated, the Defendant shall not, unless specifically ordered by the assigned Judge, be transported to the Court by the Hancock County Sheriff. Counsel for the Defendant shall meet with the Defendant prior to the pre-trial with the Court and again within 24 hours following the pre-trial with the Court.
- All CBCF 'completion' or 'exit' hearings currently scheduled to occur on or before May 31, 2020 will be either conducted by video or cancelled. Counsel for the Defendant and the State of Ohio shall contact the Court prior to the hearing date/time to determine how to proceed.
- All arraignments on or before May 31, 2020 for Defendants that are in custody (in-custody arraignments) shall occur in Courtroom 2 and not in the Hancock County Jail. The Defendant will continue to be taken to the 'jail courtroom' and shall appear by video. **Counsel for the Defendant shall meet with the Defendant prior to the scheduled arraignment.** Counsel for the Defendant, if appointed or retained less than 48 hours prior to the scheduled arraignment, shall make all reasonable efforts to meet with the Defendant prior to the arraignment. Defense counsel, if needed, will be permitted to speak privately with the Defendant by video during arraignments.
- During in-custody arraignments, due to the need of counsel to be able to speak privately with their clients by video during the hearings, those not directly associated with the case being conducted shall wait in the hallway until their case is called.
- The parties are encouraged, to the extent appropriate, to utilize written pleas in lieu of appearing in person for arraignments.
- Financial Review Hearings scheduled to occur on or before May 31, 2020 are continued and will be rescheduled as necessary.
- The Adult Probation Department will continue to review, on a case-by-case basis, appropriate modifications to reporting requirements for both bond and community control supervision. All questions should be directed to the supervising officer.

**UNLESS MODIFIED ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS, THESE MODIFIED  
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES SHALL BECOME EFFECTIVE  
IMMEDIATELY.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RJR', written over a horizontal line.

Judge Reginald J. Routson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JPS', written over a horizontal line.

Judge Jonathan P. Starn