

SCIOTO COUNTY
OHIO
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Kathy L. Sheport
CLERK OF COURTS



IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS,
DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISION, SCIOTO COUNTY,
PORTSMOUTH, OHIO

IN RE: : Case No. 20-CIH-071
:
OPERATIONS OF THE SCIOTO COUNTY :
DOMESTIC RELATIONS COURT : JUDGE JERRY L. BUCKLER
WHILE UNDER EXIGENT :
CIRCUMSTANCES CREATED BY :
COVID-19 : ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 3

Now comes Judge Jerry L. Buckler, resident Judge of the Scioto County Domestic Relations Court, who makes the following Findings of Fact and Administrative Orders:

1. On April 28, 2020, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine issued "COVID-19 Responsible Protocols for Getting Ohio Back to Work."
2. In light of the Governor's Responsible Restart Ohio plan, and effective Monday, May 4, 2020, the Scioto County Domestic Relations Court, shall implement the following **ORDERS** with intent to protect public health, to slowly restart all Court hearings, and to continue to protect the rights of all individuals subject to the authority of the Domestic Relations Court:

a. **All persons** entering the Scioto County Courthouse for the purpose of a Domestic Relations Court hearing shall submit to security screenings at the Courthouse entrance that shall include but not be limited to a body temperature scan. Any person presenting with a temperature above the standard and normal body temperature, shall not be permitted to enter the Courthouse for the purpose of a Domestic Relations Court hearing.

b. **All persons** entering the Scioto County Courthouse for the purpose of a Domestic Relations Court hearing shall bring with them an appropriate face covering. Any person presenting without a face covering shall not be permitted to enter the Courthouse for the purpose of a Domestic Relations Court hearing. The Domestic Relations Court shall not provide face coverings.

c. Once in the Courthouse, and more specifically in the Domestic Relations Court hallway, **all persons** shall wear their face covering and shall maintain proper social distancing.

d. **No person** shall be permitted access to the Domestic Relations Court Judge's chambers.

e. **No person** shall be permitted access to the Domestic Relations Court Magistrate's chambers.

f. Litigants shall not bring family members and/or children into the Courthouse for purposes of a Domestic Relations Court hearing unless otherwise specifically ordered by the Court.

g. Witnesses to be called in a Domestic Relations Court hearing shall remain

outside the Courthouse until such time as they are telephoned to report to the hearing. As such, litigants and/or attorneys shall have witness telephone numbers readily available during a hearing.

h. No person shall be permitted access to the Domestic Relations Court courtroom without first maintaining good hygiene including but not limited to hand washing and sanitizing.

i. Domestic Relations Court bailiffs shall call all cases and shall instruct litigants and attorneys as to when they are permitted to enter the Courtroom.

j. Once in the Domestic Relations Court courtroom, no litigant and/or attorney shall walk in front of counsel tables. Neither litigants nor attorneys are permitted to approach the bench.

k. All employees of the Scioto County Domestic Relations Court shall conduct daily health assessments to determine whether or not they are fit for duty.

l. Unless otherwise ordered and/or instructed, pre-trials and status conferences shall be held via telephone conference.

m. If a matter is uncontested, litigants and/or their attorneys should call and advise the Court and/or file a request for hearing and specifically note that the matter is uncontested. The Court Administrator will immediately schedule same for an uncontested hearing and/or may advance an already scheduled hearing.

n. Judicial staff and/or courthouse janitorial staff shall clean and sanitize the Domestic Relations Court courtrooms and offices, as well as the Domestic Relations Court hallway, throughout the workday and at the close of business or between shifts.

o. Divorce, dissolution, parentage, and other domestic relations packets will not be distributed to litigants by staff of the Domestic Relations Court. These packets are available to the public via the Scioto County Domestic Relations Court's website at www.sciotocountydrcourt.com. Checklists are also available on the Court's website.

p. In all Domestic Relations Court cases involving children, no person shall be required to attend the Successful Co-Parenting class. Instead, litigants shall complete the online course entitled "Ohio Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course." Litigants shall be required to complete the \$25.00, 4 hour course prior to the granting of a divorce or dissolution. Certificates of completion must be filed with the Domestic Relations Court.

q. This public health emergency shall be considered to be a finding of "just cause" for continuances deemed necessary by the Court on a case-by-case basis.

r. The Domestic Relations Court will have the lawful authority, within constitutional limits, to do or direct to be done all things necessary to ensure the orderly and efficient administration of justice and public safety for the duration of the declared state of emergency.

s. Judicial staff, employees, attorneys and deputies assigned to the Courthouse who exhibit signs of illness consistent with COVID-19, or are aware that they have come in contact with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19, shall notify their employing or reporting authority by telephone or email and shall not come into the courthouse or report for work unless specifically instructed to do so by the employing or reporting authority.

t. The Scioto County Domestic Relations Court is open. The public may continue to utilize the court services provided they follow all applicable public health guidelines as well as specific court guidelines and/or orders.

u. This Administrative Order shall remain in effect for a duration of sixty (60) days, unless the Court determines an extension is deemed necessary due to the emergency status.

v. Any prior Administrative Orders of this Court not specifically modified herein shall remain in full force and effect.

WHEREFORE, it is the intent of the Scioto County Domestic Relations Court to follow the rules and protocols implemented by the State of Ohio, the Governor of the State of Ohio, and the public health experts and gradually resume full Court operations.

Further, the Domestic Relations Court intends to assist all persons with matters in the Domestic Relations Court as the Court understands these matters are personal and of great importance to Scioto County families. In furtherance of this goal, the Court will utilize non-oral hearings (utilizing affidavits), when appropriate, to resolve certain issues and/or motions.

Further, the Domestic Relations Court will do everything that it can to protect the health of its employees, the litigants, the attorneys, and the family members that await us all at home at the end of the business day. Additionally, all actions taken by the Domestic Relations Court will be made to support our community efforts to control the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Litigants and attorneys are encouraged to contact the Scioto County Domestic


Relations Court (1-740-355-8316) regarding the status of scheduled hearings or with any and all procedural questions. Additionally, litigants and attorneys can access their case(s) via the Scioto County Clerk of Courts website at www.sciotocountycpcourt.org.

The Scioto County Domestic Relations Court shall temporarily maintain its reduced hours of operation, aka Covid-19 Hours of Operation, to-wit: Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m to 2:00 p.m., until further Order of the Court.

All until further Order of this Court.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

ENTER:



JERRY L. BUCKLER - JUDGE
Court of Common Pleas
Domestic Relations Division

04/30/2020
Date

cc: Scioto County Bar Association
Scioto County Court of Common Pleas, General Division
Scioto County Court of Common Pleas, Juvenile/Probate Divisions
Scioto County Clerk of Courts
Scioto County Prosecutor
Scioto County Commissioners
Scioto County Health Department
The Portsmouth Daily Times
The Scioto Voice
Ohio Judicial Conference
The Supreme Court of Ohio (via localcourts@sc.ohio.gov)