

FILED  
COMMON PLEAS COURT  
MUSKINGUM CO., OHIO

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS, MUSKINGUM COUNTY, OHIO 2021 JUN 13 AM 11:36  
DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISION

~~WENDY J. SOWERS~~  
~~JUDGMENT ENTRY~~  
CLERK

**IN RE: TEMPORARY ORDER IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS**

The Muskingum County Common Pleas Court, Domestic Relations Division, has implemented the following measures to reduce the volume of persons entering our Court to help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The Court remains open for business. Filings will continue to be accepted via U.S. Mail filing and drop box filing. The Court will continue to be open and staffed during regular business hours. To maintain the safety of the public and Court employees, and to comply with guidelines, physical access to the Court will continue to be restricted. All persons entering the building will be subject to screening, including the taking of their temperature. Any person with a fever in excess of 99.9 degrees or otherwise not meeting the conditions of the screening questionnaire will not be permitted access.

All persons entering the building shall wear at all times a face mask or material that covers the mouth and nose. Each person is responsible for providing their own mask. Court personnel must wear masks while having contact within six (6) feet of persons entering the building. Any person who violates or refuses to comply with this requirement will be denied entry or escorted from the building.

Physical distancing shall be strictly maintained and enforced in accordance with federal and state guidelines. Because droplets containing live virus may travel six (6) feet or more, seating in waiting rooms/areas shall be minimized or eliminated, and seating in the courtrooms shall be rearranged to assure compliance with distancing guidelines. In all cases, use of the waiting room/areas shall be discouraged, with parties taken to the courtroom or a conference room as soon as practical.

Court programs should continue to use electronic contact whenever possible. All non-essential in-person contact should be avoided, and when necessary appropriate personal protective gear must be worn and safety precautions must be taken.

To the fullest extent possible, and in compliance with applicable law and County and Court policy, employees of the Court shall be informed when s/he has been exposed to a confirmed or suspected COVID 19 case. Any ill employee and persons identified by contact tracing shall be quarantined in accordance with applicable guidelines.

All matters, other than those as determined by the Judge or Magistrate, shall be scheduled for remote appearance unless otherwise requested by a party. This complies with guidelines to

reduce the number of persons coming into a workplace, keep gatherings under ten (10) people at a time, and maintain appropriate social distancing of six (6) feet or more.

In-person hearings will be subject to continuing restrictions. Only parties, and counsel of record, will be permitted access at the scheduled time. Witnesses may not be permitted into the building until they are called to testify. Parties/counsel should have the ability to contact witnesses by phone or email when the court is ready. Be advised, this procedure may slow the process and result in exceeding time allotted for a matter, which may require continuing a matter in progress to a later date.

The preferred method of remote attendance is via Zoom; instructions and guidelines will be provided. You must contact the Court immediately, and no less than one (1) week before the hearing, to request a different video conference platform. If no other option is available, upon written request, the Court may grant a pro se litigant or witness further accommodation, such as appearing by telephone.

Each party shall file with the Court and provide to opposing parties a witness list at least five (5) days in advance of the hearing, which shall include a valid email address for each party, attorney if represented, and witness. A copy of all exhibits the parties intend to use during the hearing must be provided to the Court and opposing parties at least five (5) days prior to hearing. A hard copy of the exhibits must be provided directly to the Court by delivering a copy to the first floor security officer at 22 N. Fifth Street Zanesville Ohio. The exhibits shall be pre-marked with the Plaintiff/Petitioner using numbers and all Defendants/Counter-Petitioners/Respondents using letters with name identifier (i.e. Defendant Smith A). Failure to timely submit the witness list or exhibits may result in the Court not permitting a witness to testify or an exhibit to be used.

To allow the Court to conduct the matter and maintain the record, it is mandatory that each remote location be free of noise and clutter, which includes clearing pets and others from the room and silencing cell phones. In the event any party becomes disconnected during the hearing, the Court will recess the matter to allow the party to reconnect and then continue the hearing. Failure to immediately reconnect may result in the matter proceeding in the party's absence.

Emergency hearings and any hearing deemed time-sensitive by the individual Judge or Magistrate will be held in-person. Such hearings include, but are not limited to, emergency hearings, requests for ex parte orders, contempt hearings, and Civil Protection Order hearings. However, where children are stabilized in appropriate placement or no emergency is found to exist, hearings will not automatically be considered "essential" unless otherwise so designated by the assigned Judge or Magistrate.

With respect to parenting time issues and school closures, parents who have shared parenting plans or custody orders should continue to follow those orders to the best of their abilities and in the spirit intended by the Court's order. Parents should continue to exchange their child(ren) as required by their parenting plans or custody orders. Parties should adhere to all holiday and spring break schedules as designated by their schools at the beginning of the school year, or as set forth otherwise in their court order, regardless of recent changes. Parents should follow the

regular parenting schedule during all other times, unless their orders specifically address school closures. The parties should also communicate about the location, health, and welfare of the children daily and should discuss travel plans and arrangements as required by their parenting plans or custody orders.

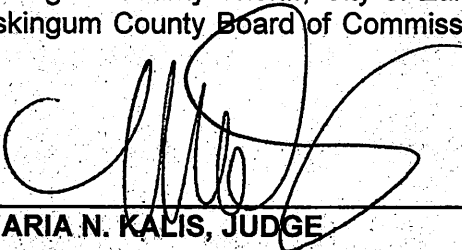
Parents who have court-ordered parenting time and test positive for COVID-19 shall immediately contact the other parent to notify them of the positive test. The parties should make arrangements to ensure the child(ren)'s safety and well-being by agreement; if they cannot agree, either parent may file a motion with the Court.

The Court recognizes the importance of parenting time and companionship time and encourages parents to ensure children have frequent communication with parents and other relatives telephonically and electronically.

The changes outlined above shall continue through March 31, 2021, and we expect to return to normal operations on April 1, 2021. The Court shall re-evaluate the current COVID-19 outbreak status prior to March 31, 2021, and ascertain whether any further extension of curtailed operations is warranted.

This "Temporary Order" is ordered to be served on the Supreme Court of Ohio, Ohio Judicial Conference, Muskingum County Court of Common Pleas General Division, Muskingum County Court, Muskingum County Clerk of Courts, Muskingum County Bar Association, Muskingum County Building Department, Muskingum County Records Department, Muskingum County Law Library, Muskingum County Prosecutor's Office, Muskingum County Sheriff, City of Zanesville Law Director, Zanesville Police Department and Muskingum County Board of Commissioners, and to be posted on the website of this court.

**SO ORDERED.**



MARIA N. KALIS, JUDGE