

IN THE JUVENILE COURT OF HAMILTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

Plan for Recommencing Limited In-Person Hearings

Pursuant to Tennessee Supreme Court Order Modifying Suspension of In-Person Court Proceedings and Further Extension of Deadlines No. ADM2020-00428 filed April 24, 2020, the following plan has been implemented to gradually begin conducting in-person court proceedings in some non-emergency matters.

1) Hamilton County Juvenile Court will remain open during regular business hours at both the main courthouse located at 1600 East Third Street and the Child Support Division located at 1221 East Main Street subject to the following limitations.

2) The Court will continue to conduct business by means other than in-person hearings and will continue to increase the use of telephonic and video conferencing (WebEx) or other means that do not involve in-person appearances, with in-person appearances used as a last resort after reasonable consideration of alternatives including and up to a continuance to a later date. All dockets will be reviewed at least seven (7) days prior to the scheduled hearing by the Judge or Magistrate who will confer with attorneys where appropriate, determine whether the case is ready for a hearing, and set up a WebEx hearing. Self-represented litigants will be contacted by Court staff or a Deputy Clerk regarding the same. All cases will be staggered in increments of time rather than a normal docket call time. Necessary documents, reports or other exhibits should be lodged with the Clerk prior to the hearing.

3) New Arrests will continue to be judicially reviewed within hours. Detention hearings will continue to be held daily at staggered times in thirty-minute increments as have been done since the pandemic began.

4) Hamilton County Juvenile Court Recovery Court will continue to meet via WebEx or Zoom. Serious Habitual Offender Community Action Program "SHOCAP" leadership meetings will be held via WebEx.

5) The following programs and/or regular meetings will be cancelled until further notice:

Hamilton County Juvenile Court Youth Court Sessions
Hamilton County Juvenile Court Commission Meetings
Foster Care Review Board Meetings
Child Support Clinics

6) Juveniles on probation, house arrest and any other program that requires regular meetings or telephonic reporting must continue to report by telephone by contacting their probation officer prior to scheduled meetings.

7) Attorneys are strongly encouraged to mail, email, or fax pleadings to the Clerk's Office for filing rather than coming in to the courthouse. Additional guidance for filing remotely is available on the County web site and through the Clerk's Office.

8) Court Security Staff will be available at the front door of each location to answer questions and direct the public as appropriate. Court staff will check-in at the door and obtain immediate contact information for visitors who will then be asked to remain outside or in their cars. Screening for staff and visitors will be accomplished with touchless thermometers and Health Department recommended health questions relevant to COVID-19 before entry into the courthouse. Within the lobby, most chairs have been removed to provide ample distance for visitors who must be allowed into the courthouse and who have been appropriately screened. Ten adequately spaced chairs are all that remain in the lobbies. Staff will be required to wear masks when in contact with any other person or when moving about the building. Gloves are available to anyone in the building and are strongly encouraged when exchanging documents and other items. Staffing levels will be adjusted on a regular basis by the Administrator to meet obligations in the building while continuing to limit the presence of some staff members who will continue to work from home.

9) As most Juvenile Court hearings are closed to the public, the number of people inside a courtroom at any given time is naturally limited. However, a limit of ten (10) will be used at the Third Street location and a limit of seven (7) will be used at the Main Street location. Within the courtrooms, attorneys and litigants will be asked to distance themselves from others, utilizing the space-marked galley seats rather than counsel table.

10) The Court is taking every reasonable precaution within the facilities to ensure the best sanitary practices. These include frequent disinfecting of all regularly-touched surfaces, restrooms and waiting areas, making hand sanitizer available, and requiring staff members and visitors to strictly adhere to contact instructions promulgated by the health experts in addition to the mandated requirements above.

This 6th day of May, 2020.

 /s/ Rob Philyaw
Robert D. Philyaw, Judge