



Judge L. Marie Williams

Hamilton County Circuit Court
625 Georgia Avenue, Room 308
Chattanooga, TN 37402
Phone: (423) 209-6747
Fax: (423) 209-7393

Pamela J. Stacks
Administrative Assistant

April 6, 2020

Colleagues:

First, we hope this letter finds you and your family and friends well. Your Judges appreciate the professionalism and competence with which you are navigating these challenging times.

As you know, the Tennessee Supreme Court has adopted rules which permit certain deviations from our normal practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. Among these variances is the filing of certain pleadings by email. You will find posted on the Chattanooga Bar Association website and the website for the Circuit Court Clerk of the 11th Judicial District the protocols which have been adopted by the Circuit Court. We ask you carefully review these protocols. We also would like to emphasize that our clerks, and especially our bench clerks, are under a great deal of pressure during this time and are working as diligently as humanly possible to meet your requests and needs. Please be patient with them. Please consider communicating with them by email as opposed to phone. They are able to respond more efficiently to emails than phone calls. Additionally, if a clerk responds to you by email on a matter concerning which you need to enter discussions with the other attorneys, please do not "reply to all" so as to include the clerk while you and the other attorneys navigate your discussions.

Your Judges recognize that your clients' emotions in all probability are running high at this point in time. Particularly in conflicted family law situations, those emotions may result in overly aggressive approaches by your clients to the other parent of a child. Your Judges have been requested to consider implementing policies about disputes between parents. Please understand this is not possible. First, the Tennessee Supreme Court has instructed us not to adopt blanket orders. We would not have adopted blanket orders even in the absence of this instruction because to do so would violate due process rights. We cannot and will not enter orders without hearings or agreements. That being said, please recognize that what your clients might consider an emergency more often than not does not constitute an emergency in reality. Your Judges will decide whether or not your situation is an emergency justifying an in-person hearing. If so, that will be scheduled. If not, a hearing conducted using available technology will be scheduled. Please attempt to resolve by conference calling first and if no agreement is reached, call the clerk.

April 6, 2020

Page Two

Our Bar is doing an outstanding job of cooperating and working with each other during this time. We would encourage you to continue to do so and to recall your roles as attorneys and counselors at law. It is incumbent upon the attorneys to take the lead in finding practical, rational solutions which meet the needs of all litigants involved in a case.

Your Judges thank you for your hard work during this time and your professionalism and the special talents you can bring to serving your clients when met with these challenges.

Very truly yours,




J. B. Bennett, Division I



W. Jeffrey Hollingsworth, Division II



L. Marie Williams, Division III



Kyle E. Hedrick, Division IV