

**IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
DOMESTIC RELATIONS AND JUVENILE BRANCH
FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO**

20JU-03-3181

**FOURTH AMENDED ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER IN RESPONSE
TO THE COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS**

The Administrative Judge of the Domestic Relations and Juvenile Branch of the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, in consultation with the other Judges of this Bench, hereby makes the following Findings of Fact:

1. On March 9, 2020, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine initially issued Executive Order 2020-01D “Declaring a State of Emergency” in response to the growing COVID-19 public health crisis through May 1, 2020. On/about April 30, 2020, Governor DeWine (via Dr. Amy Acton) issued a “Stay Safe Ohio” Order through May 29, 2020.
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 18, 2020, the Court issued its first Administrative Order, which was amended on April 2, 2020, May 8, 2020 and September 9, 2020, detailing a continuum of flexible responses designed to protect public health, to maintain essential court functions, to protect the safety and welfare of its staff and customers and to protect the rights of all individuals subject to the authority of the Court.
4. The existing public health emergency has not yet been abated. In fact, drastic spikes in the levels of COVID-19 infections dictate the Court’s resumption of “curtailed operations” through Friday, January 29, 2021. Thus, the following plan is necessary as COVID-19 is a highly contagious viral ailment for which there is presently no direct treatment, nor any available vaccination.

Based upon these Findings of Fact, the Franklin County Domestic Relations and Juvenile Branch of the Court of Common Pleas **HEREBY ORDERS:**

1. The Court hereby acknowledges the relevant portions of the written guidance of the Supreme Court of Ohio, most recently reaffirmed via e-mail dated October 28, 2020. Additionally, the Court acknowledges the public health curfew announced by Ohio Governor Mike DeWine on November 17, 2020 and the Public Health Stay-At-Home Advisory jointly issued by the Health Commissioner for the City of Columbus, Dr. Mysheika W. Roberts, and the Health Commissioner for Franklin County Public Health, Joe Mazzola, on November 17, 2020.
2. While the Court hereby reinstates “**curtailed operations**” from **Monday, November 23, 2020 through close of business on Friday, January 29, 2021**, it reserves the right to further extend this Administrative Order should the existing public health emergency so dictate.
3. From Monday, November 23, 2020 through close of business on Friday, January 29, 2021, **the Court shall remain open for business**; however, the Court’s in-person hours shall be limited to: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8am until 3pm.
4. Effective Monday, November 23, 2020, only persons necessary to support essential in-person hearings and essential administrative court functions shall be physically present at the DRJ Court, including the Juvenile Intervention Center. Outside persons interacting with the Court shall continue to do so remotely.
5. The CPO/JPO Help Desk shall be open to the public on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8am until 2pm; the Help Desk will take its last petition promptly at 2pm.
6. Through January 29, 2021, the Court will prioritize hearing essential cases utilizing videoconferencing technology to the extent possible. “Essential cases” are:
 - Civil Protective Orders (CPOs),
 - delinquency proceedings, and
 - permanent court commitment cases.
7. The Court continues its policy of **not requiring** litigants or attorneys to appear in person for hearings at this time. Persons who are unwilling or unable to attend an in-person hearing due to COVID-19 concerns/complications may request a continuance. Reasonable, advance continuance requests will be granted.

8. The Court will continue to accept pleadings, forms and other paperwork via e-filing (which is preferred) and in-person at the Clerk's Office. Motions for Continuance and/or Motions to Modify an *ex parte* Civil Protection Order (CPO) may also be filed by e-mail directly to the assigned courtroom. A list of those contact telephone numbers, email addresses and Zoom Meeting IDs is located on the DRJ Court website: <https://drj.fccourts.org>.
9. The Court continues to encourage litigants and attorneys to waive in-person hearings to facilitate the Court's hearing of uncontested/agreed cases, pre-trial and status conferences, and other domestic and custody matters via videoconferencing technology (or Zoom). Using the attached form, parties and/or their counsel may submit requests for videoconference hearings directly to assigned jurists. Additional information regarding videoconference hearings is located on the DRJ Court website: <https://drj.fccourts.org> or via these links: https://drj.fccourts.org/DRJ.aspx?PN=Meet_the_judges.htmJudiciary or <https://drj.fccourts.org/DRJ.aspx?PN=Forms.htm>.
10. Specific docket questions should be addressed directly to the staffs of the assigned Magistrates and Judges; telephones and email accounts shall be monitored remotely **Monday through Friday from 8am until 5pm**.
11. Public access to the DRJ Court lobby, back hallways, private offices and wait areas in all court facilities shall remain extremely limited to maintain the safety of detained youth, the public and court employees; this is done in compliance with local, state, federal, and Ohio Supreme Court guidelines. In most instances, in-person interaction with court staff and detained youth will be facilitated through clear barriers, walk-up windows and video terminals to ensure proper social distancing. See Amended Administrative Order (AAO) filed September 9, 2020.
12. Existing mandates regarding the wearing of facial coverings by all persons working in/visiting any court space, maintaining 6-foot social distancing, observing the 10-person limit in courtrooms remain in effect. Additionally, Court Navigators/court staff will continue to monitor and enforce occupancy restrictions in all court facilities, including the Juvenile Intervention Center.

13. Pursuant to guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, the Columbus/Franklin County/Ohio Departments of Health and the Supreme Court of Ohio, litigants and/or counsel displaying any symptom that *could be construed* as COVID-19 related will be ordered to leave the courthouse; their cases will be continued.
14. In order to preserve proper occupancy standards on DRJ Court floors and at the Juvenile Intervention Center, scheduled cases will begin and end at the scheduled time; thus, tardy cases will be continued. All pre-hearing consultations and/or negotiations must occur *prior* to arrival in the courthouse and be concluded by the scheduled hearing time; conference rooms court wide shall remain locked.
15. Juvenile Community Enrichment Services (JCES), Mediation, the Self-Represented Resource Center, the Reception Center, and other core court programs shall continue to utilize telephonic and other electronic services wherever possible. Intake, supervision, contact and testing via JCES and/or the Juvenile Intervention Center should continue to be conducted by electronic means whenever possible.
16. This Amended Administrative Order in Response to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Public Health Crisis shall be communicated to the Franklin County Commissioners, other Franklin County Courts and local justice partners. This Order, and any amendments thereto, shall be filed with the Franklin County Clerk of Courts and the Supreme Court of Ohio and shall be posted to the DRJ Court website: <https://drj.fccourts.org>.
17. During the period of curtailed operations, Court staff shall work onsite only as directed by their supervisors. The Court intends to resume its normal business hours of Monday through Friday, 8am until 5pm effective February 1, 2021. Court staff shall resume onsite work on that date unless authorized to work remotely by their supervisors. Also, on February 1, 2021, the Court intends to resume scheduling in-person hearings. Again, the Court will endeavor to conduct as many of its cases and interactions via available technology as practical, and persons who are unwilling or unable to attend an in-person hearing due to COVID-19 concerns/complications may request a continuance. Reasonable, advance continuance requests will be granted.

18. Curtailed and/or limited operation provisions and/or policies previously effectuated by the Court pursuant to its March 18, 2020, April 2, 2020, May 8, 2020 and September 9, 2020 Orders shall remain in full effect, unless specifically modified herein.

IT IS SO ORDERED!



JUDGE KIM A. BROWNE
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE

EFFECTIVE DATE:
NOVEMBER 23, 2020