

CC: Lisa I. Swenski, Administrative Judge
Judge Sherry Glass
Judge Frank Janik
Jody Barilla, Court Administrator

JOURNAL ENTRY
COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISION
Lorain County, Ohio

Case No. 2021 MISC

In Re:

**ORDER DECLARING A JUDICIAL
EMERGENCY AND CONTINUITY
OF OPERATIONS OF THE COURT
DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Date:05/26/2021 Volume _____ Page _____

The Lorain County Domestic Relations Court takes the health and safety of both the public conducting business with the court and the staff conducting business on behalf of the court very seriously. Due to the continued need for caution and safety procedures because of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Court issues the following orders:

- (1) The Domestic Relations Court will continue to limit face-to-face Court business to essential functions only, effective May 28, 2021, through June 30, 2021, to be re-evaluated at that time. Essential functions generally include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Ex-Parte Petitions for Domestic Violence Civil Protections Orders and review hearings;
 - b. Ex-Parte Petitions for Juvenile Protection Orders and review hearings;
 - c. Ex-Parte Motions for Emergency Temporary Custody and review hearings;

d. Adjudication and Dispositional Hearings in Abuse/Neglect/Dependency Cases;

e. Shelter care hearings for Abuse/Neglect/Dependency Cases;

f. Juvenile Detention Matters;

g. Judicial Bypass of Consent Hearings;

h. Any hearings for Juveniles in detention; and

i. Any hearings for supervising Juveniles in detention or Turning Point Shelter.

(2) The Court will evaluate all other types of “nonessential” hearings or meetings for participation through video or telephonic means, or in person if deemed necessary. The assigned Judge will have the discretion to continue or proceed with any “nonessential” matter by teleconference, video conference, other technological methods, or in person if deemed necessary. The Court will be notifying those who have hearings scheduled during this time frame regarding the status and mode of those hearings;

(3) The Court authorizes the use of audio-visual devices and technologies for all actions and proceedings;

(4) The Juvenile Clerk’s office remains open to accept filings and payments. The Juvenile Clerk’s office accepts payments online; visit the Court website at www.lcdrc.org. The Domestic Relations Clerk’s office accepts payments online; visit the Clerk of Court’s website at www.loraincounty.us/clerk/;

(5) This public health emergency may be considered a finding of “just cause” for continuances deemed necessary by assigned judges on a case-by-case basis;

(6) The local rules of court for the Domestic and Juvenile Division may be temporarily adapted to allow court flexibility, within constitutional limits, in response to the public health emergency;

- (7) The Court's security policies may be temporarily amended or supplemented to protect public health while maintaining essential court functions;
- (8) The Court's Personnel Policies and Procedures Handbook and other usual and customary human resource provisions may be temporarily adjusted to maintain essential court operations and functions;
- (9) The Court will have the lawful authority, within constitutional limits, to do and direct to be done all things necessary to ensure the orderly and efficient administration of justice for the duration of the declared public health emergency;
- (10) All individuals, including Court judicial officers and personnel, entering the Justice Center and desiring to conduct business with and/or appear in the domestic relations court must wear a face covering and may be subject to available health screening or testing, and may be excluded from admission based upon the refusal to wear a face covering unless medically excused or upon the results of such screening or testing. In the Justice Center, this includes the Juvenile Clerk's Office, Room 110, the second floor and the fourth floor, in the lobby areas as well as courtrooms and Magistrate hearing rooms. This also includes the Court's Juvenile Complex buildings, including but not limited to the Juvenile Detention Home, Turning Point Shelter, the Assessment Center, the Multipurpose Building, and Crossroads evening reporting program;
- (11) Any Court employee who exhibits signs of illness must notify their direct supervisor by telephone or e-mail and shall not come into the courthouse or report for duty. Any individual within the courthouse who exhibits signs of illness shall be directed to leave the building immediately and seek medical advice before being permitted to re-enter the building at a later date;

(12) Employees who have not been vaccinated shall wear a mask or face covering while at work and maintain social distancing. Upon showing proof of vaccination to Administration with the final vaccine at least two weeks prior, employees who have been vaccinated may remove their masks while at work. Vaccinated employees may choose to continue to wear a mask. All Detention Home and Turning Point employees will continue to wear a mask while at work. Probation Department staff will wear a mask when interacting with youth and their families.

(13) The Court shall attempt to minimize the social interaction of litigants, attorneys, witnesses, jurors, law enforcement personnel, and judicial personnel and promote a safe court environment by following all Department of Health recommendations when conducting hearings in person. The Court requires face coverings, maintaining appropriate social distance, and limiting the number of people gathered. The Court will not require proof of vaccination from attorneys or members of the public. However, should anyone appearing for a court hearing choose to show a copy of their vaccination card that supports it has been two weeks or longer since their last vaccination, the court may allow that person to remove their mask. The Judge or Magistrate before whom the person is appearing will determine whether a person may remove their mask while in his/her courtroom. The court will not retain a record of vaccination cards. It will need to be shown each time a person appears for court;

(14) Employees of the Court not on duty in the courthouse may work, to the extent possible, remotely, and in accordance with the directives of their department head and/or supervisor; and

(15) This Court order will be served upon the Lorain County Prosecutor's Office, the Lorain County Clerk of Courts, the Lorain County Common Pleas General Division, the Lorain County Sheriff, the Lorain County Commissioners, and the Ohio Supreme Court, will be published on the website of this Court, and will be provided to the Lorain County Bar Association to be disseminated to the local bar.

It is so ordered.

Administrative Judge Lisa I. Swenski