

VIRGINIA:

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE COUNTY OF STAFFORD, VIRGINIA
IN THE GENERAL DISTRICT COURT OF THE COUNTY OF STAFFORD
IN THE JUVENILE AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS DISTRICT COURT COUNTY OF
STAFFORD

ORDER TEMPORARILY SUSPENDING IN-PERSON COURT PROCEEDINGS

This Order is entered in accordance with the 14th Order of Extension of Emergency issued by the Justices of the Supreme Court of Virginia and in recognition of the modified stay at home Executive Order #72 effective December 14, 2020 issued by the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

WHEREAS, the rate of positive COVID-19 tests in Stafford is now eleven (11) percent which is more than double the five (5) percent goal set by the Governor and the Virginia Department of Health; and

WHEREAS, there have recently been a number of individuals displaying symptoms, positive test results and quarantines for CoVid-19 among Courthouse personnel and local attorneys, which the Courts find constitute a threat to the health and safety of the Clerk's Office personnel and the general public;

NOW THEREFORE, to reduce the number of people coming into the Courthouse and thereby curtail person-to-person contact, the judges of the Circuit, General District and Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courts of Stafford County do hereby order as follows:

1. All Courts will remain open;
2. All Clerks offices will be closed to the public. Personnel will be available to respond to telephonic inquiries and to process electronic filings. The Circuit Court Clerk's Office may offer a limited number of appointments for urgent matters.


3. All in-person proceedings in all Courts are suspended from the close of business December 15, 2020, through December 23, 2020, subject to the exceptions below:
 - Proceedings necessary to protect constitutional rights of criminal defendants, including bond-related matters and plea agreements for incarcerated individuals;
 - Proceedings related to relief from abuse, including but not limited to orders of protection;
 - Department of Children's Services emergency matters related to child protection;
 - Proceedings related to petitions for temporary injunctive relief;
 - Proceedings related to emergency mental health orders;
 - Proceedings related to emergency protection of elderly or vulnerable persons;
 - Proceedings directly related to the COVID-19 public health emergency; ● Proceedings for orders of protection;
 - Other exceptions as approved by a Judge of that Court.
4. The Judges of each Court are hereby authorized to determine the way in person court proceedings for the exceptions listed above are to be conducted.
5. Any permitted in court proceedings shall be limited to attorneys, parties, necessary witnesses, security officers, and other necessary persons, as determined by the trial judge.
6. Throughout the suspension period, there shall be a liberal continuance policy.

All judges and court clerks will limit in-person courtroom contact as much as possible by utilizing available technologies, including alternative means of filing, teleconferencing, email, and video conferencing hearings wherever possible, including emergency criminal and family matters.

This Order expressly does not prohibit court proceedings by telephone, video, teleconferencing, email or other means that do not involve in-person contact. This Order does not affect any court's consideration of matters that can be resolved without in-person proceedings.

This Order is intended to be interpreted broadly for the protection of the public from the risks associated with COVID-19. This Order may be shortened, modified, or extended as circumstances dictate. ^{kh}

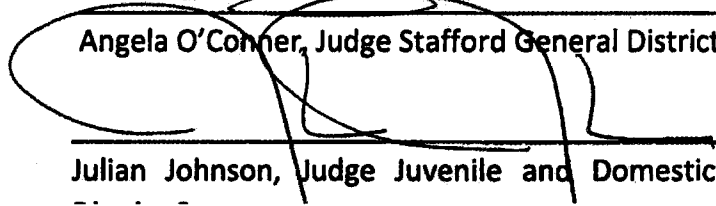
FOR THE COURTS THIS DAY OF DECEMBER 2020



Michael E. Levy, Judge Stafford Circuit Court



Angela O'Conner, Judge Stafford General District Court



Julian Johnson, Judge Juvenile and Domestic Relations
District Court
