

# Supreme Court of Kentucky

2020-13

## AMENDED ORDER

**IN RE: KENTUCKY COURT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE TO  
COVID-19 EMERGENCY**

On March 6, 2020, Governor Beshear entered Executive Order 2020-215 and declared a State of Emergency in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency in the Commonwealth. In light of this measure and to protect the health and safety of court employees, elected officials, and the general public, and under Section 116 of the Constitution and Supreme Court Rule 1.010, hereby ORDERS the following measures to be implemented from Monday, March 16, through Friday, April 24, 2020:

1. With the exception of emergency and time-sensitive matters, including but not limited to, domestic violence hearings, emergency custody hearings, temporary child support hearings, evidentiary hearings in criminal cases, in-custody arraignments, in-custody preliminary hearings under RCr 3.10, in-custody bond motions, in-custody probation violation hearings, and in-custody juvenile detention hearings, all civil and criminal dockets shall be canceled, unless a judge determines in his or her discretion that a matter requires prompt attention. Judges must use available telephonic and video technology to conduct all hearings, unless the parties are unable to participate remotely.

In those limited circumstances requiring an in-person hearing, courtroom attendance shall be limited to attorneys, parties, necessary witnesses, and domestic violence advocates. No more than 10 people may be in the courtroom at any time unless the judge in his or her discretion deems it necessary and enforces appropriate distances between individuals.

2. All civil trials shall be postponed and rescheduled for a later date. Any civil trial currently in progress shall be continued or completed at the discretion of the presiding judge. Judges may use available telephonic and video technology to conduct hearings in a civil case if the judge

determines in his or her discretion that the matter merits prompt attention.

3. Reasonable attempts shall be made to reschedule all criminal trials, subject to a defendant's right to a speedy trial.
4. With the exception of emergency matters and hearings statutorily required to be held, small claims, eviction,<sup>1</sup> juvenile, probate, traffic, and guardianship cases shall be continued. Judges may, however, use available video and telephone technology to appoint fiduciaries in probate matters and to address any other probate matter that in the judge's discretion merits prompt attention.
5. Judges should continue to address matters that may be appropriately handled without the necessity of a hearing or personal appearance.
6. A case involving an attorney or party who is ill or in a high-risk category shall be rescheduled.
7. Judges shall issue summonses in lieu of bench warrants or notices of failure to appear.
8. All show cause dockets for payment of fines and court costs scheduled within this timeframe shall be continued for 60 days.
9. The 20-day preliminary hearing requirement for out-of-custody defendants under RCr 3.10 is waived during the effective dates of this Order.
10. Jurors who are ill, caring for someone who is ill, or in a high-risk category shall have their jury service postponed to a later date.
11. New juror orientations shall be suspended unless an exception is granted by the Chief Justice.
12. Existing jury panels may be extended at the discretion of the court.

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to Executive Order 2020-257, evictions shall be suspended during the State of Emergency (Executive Order 2020-215).

13. The circuit court is authorized to extend the 60-day period in RCr 5.22(3) for a period not to exceed 45 days for good cause shown. The Commonwealth's Attorney shall request an extension by separate motion as to each defendant and shall give prompt notice of the motion to defense counsel. The circuit court shall allow both the Commonwealth's Attorney and defense counsel to be heard prior to entering any order extending the period in RCr 5.22(3).
14. Attorneys are encouraged to use e-Filing.
15. If available, drop boxes should be used for conventionally filed documents.
16. Signage shall be posted at all public entry points advising individuals not to enter the building if they have:
  - a. In the previous 14 days, visited China, Iran, South Korea, any European countries, or any other high-risk countries identified by the CDC;
  - b. Resided with or been in close contact with someone who has been in any of those countries within the previous 14 days;
  - c. Traveled domestically within the United States where COVID-19 has sustained widespread community transmission;
  - d. Been asked to self-quarantine by any doctor, hospital, or health agency;
  - e. Been diagnosed with or have had contact with anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19; or
  - f. A fever, cough or shortness of breath.
17. Individuals attempting to enter in violation of these protocols shall be denied entrance by a bailiff or court security officer.
18. Bailiffs shall discourage congregating outside courtroom doors and encourage social distancing inside the courtroom.
19. Individuals with legitimate court business who are ill, caring for someone who is ill or in a high-risk category are advised to stay home and request a continuance by calling the local Office of Circuit Court Clerk.

This Order replaces in its entirety Administrative Order 2020-10. Nothing in this Order shall preclude the chief district and chief circuit judges from implementing additional local restrictions as needed; however, under no circumstances may a courthouse be closed without prior authorization from the Chief Justice. This Order shall be effective from Monday, March 16, through Friday, April 24, 2020, or until further Order of this Court.

Entered this 26th day of March 2020.

  
CHIEF JUSTICE

All sitting; all concur.