



CIRCUIT COURT FOR HARFORD COUNTY



REVISED **COVID-19 Court Re-Opening Plan** **Phase II: November 30, 2020-February 12, 2021**

The Circuit Court for Harford County has the responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all individuals entering the Courthouse.¹ This includes Courthouse employees and occupants, attorneys, litigants, and visitors. In light of this responsibility and in accordance with the *Sixth Administrative Order Restricting Statewide Judiciary Operations Due to the COVID-19 Emergency* issued November 24, 2020 (“Administrative Order”) [Sixth Administrative Order](#) this Court will implement the following protective measures and docketing/scheduling priorities effective November 30, 2020. Phase II of the reopening of the Courthouse is expected to last until February 12, 2021.

GENERAL

All persons entering the building must submit to a temperature check with a digital thermometer, must answer screening questions related to COVID-19 symptoms. *See* Attachment A. All persons in the Courthouse must wear a mask/covering to prevent or protect against transmission of the Coronavirus, and must maintain social distancing protocols. Any person who exhibits now known symptoms of the Coronavirus, or who refuses to wear a mask/covering, or does not maintain social distancing protocols, or who does not otherwise follow the safety and security directives of Security Officers will be denied entrance to the Courthouse, or will be required to leave the Courthouse. If, as a result of the screening process a person is denied entry, or is otherwise required to leave the Courthouse, that person will be provided information regarding alternative means to address the purpose of that person’s intended visit to the Court. *See* Attachment B.

On a frequent and ongoing basis, the Courthouse will be sanitized to maintain appropriate hygiene/cleaning standards recommended to prevent transmission of the Coronavirus. All public areas of the Courthouse, including courtrooms, also will be marked to promote social distancing. On a case by case basis a judge or magistrate presiding over a hearing may implement any other appropriate measures to protect against transmission of the Coronavirus in a courtroom.

COURTHOUSE HOURS, CLERK’S OFFICE AVAILABILITY, AND OCCUPANCY

1. Access to the Courthouse by the general public will be restricted, and entry by the general public, if permitted, will be limited to the Courtland Street entrance.

¹ This responsibility is not an admission of liability for tort claims or otherwise on the part of the Court or the Maryland Judiciary.

2. The Courthouse will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., in a manner necessary to effectuate the mission of the Court, which may, at times be limited to only electronic or telephonic access.
 - a. The Office of the Clerk shall remain closed to the public except for the filing of emergency matters and by appointment for other purposes.
 - b. For non-emergency in-person filings, all individuals must use Drop Box located in the vestibule on the Courtland Street entrance to the Courthouse.
 - c. Individuals required to file papers through the Maryland Electronic Court System (MDEC) may not use the Drop Box, and must use MDEC to file papers with the Court.
3. Court activities shall proceed with restrictions to limit the concentration of individuals and allow social distancing, consistent with guidance of the CDC and MDH.
4. Visitors to the Courthouse are encouraged to not bring children under the age of 16 into the Courthouse. All individuals entering the Courthouse must wear a mask/covering their nose and mouth, submit to no-contact temperature checks, and answer COVID-19 screening questions.
5. The Self-Help Center will be open from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. for pre-scheduled in-person appointments for emergency cases. Non-emergency matters may be scheduled for virtual appointments between 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Self-Help Center will continue to monitor telephone messages and will return calls within 24 hours. Contact information: 410-638-4916 or SelfHelpCtrHarford@mdcourts.gov.

DOCKETING AND SCHEDULING PRIORITIES

During Phase II of the Court reopening process, the Court will hear cases as indicated in the Administrative Order. Accordingly, during Phase II the Court will **not** hear contested cases or those involving witnesses (except in protective order cases). Most cases will be heard remotely to continue to minimize the risks associated with the Coronavirus. Therefore, attorneys and parties will be asked to provide an email address for a remote video hearing for which an electronic device with a camera will be needed. For those without access to the Internet, telephonic participation will be permitted. Below is a schedule of when certain types of cases will be heard or scheduled by the Central Assignment Office (CAO).

DRUG COURT

First and third Monday morning of each month

GUARDIANSHIP (alleged disabled adults, minors, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status)

First and third Monday afternoon of each month, unless emergent

CRIMINAL CASES

Status conferences/pretrial matters—Monday, Wednesday, and/or Friday mornings

Bail reviews and arraignments—Monday-Friday at 1:30 p.m.
Plea agreements—as scheduled by primary criminal judge or by Criminal Assignment
Violations of Probation—pre-designated days each month for each judge

FAMILY CASES

Uncontested divorces—Tuesday mornings (senior judge)
Default hearings—Tuesday mornings (judge)
Exceptions— as currently scheduled
Protective orders: Temporary orders, when filed; Final orders, 7 days later
Peace order appeals and extreme risk protective order appeals—as scheduled by CAO
Special Juvenile Immigrant Status—as scheduled by CAO
Emergency—scheduled for a hearing only if deemed to be an emergency
Scheduling conferences/status conferences/pendente lite hearings:
Magistrate Hart—scheduled throughout the week
Magistrate Hatem—Monday through Thursday
Magistrate Walker—Monday through Thursday
Judge Eaves and Senior Judge—3 days a week as needed
IV-D child support establishment/paternity admissions/contempt—Mon. and Wed. (p.m.)
Matters that can be handled remotely or without testimony or both

CIVIL CASES (uncontested or argument only)

On the record appeals—as scheduled by CAO
Civil motions—as scheduled by CAO
Civil pretrial conferences—Thursday and Friday (senior judge)
Matters that can be handled remotely or without testimony or both

JUVENILE CASES

Closed hearings scheduled before the Juvenile Magistrate

REGISTER OF WILLS

Scheduled 2 days a week

CONCLUSION

The Court will strive to hear all matters during Phase II in a safe and efficient manner. All Courthouse employees and occupants, attorneys, litigants, and visitors, are expected to exhibit the utmost degree of civility and patience appropriate to having matters resolved in this public forum.

December 8, 2020
DATE

_____/S/
ANGELA M. EAVES,
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE