



CIRCUIT COURT FOR HARFORD COUNTY



COVID-19 Court Re-Opening Plan Phase IV: March 15, 2021- April 25, 2021 **REVISED: February 24, 2021**

The Circuit Court for Harford County has a 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 Amended Administrative Order Expanding Statewide Judiciary Operations In Light of the COVID-19 Emergency issued by Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera of the Court of Appeals of Maryland on February 16, 2021 (hereafter “Amended Administrative Order”), this Court will proceed to Phase IV of the reopening of the Courthouse on March 15, 2021.

GENERAL

All persons entering the building must submit to a temperature check with a no-contact thermometer and 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 precautions to protect against transmission of the Coronavirus in a courtroom.

COURTHOUSE HOURS, CLERK’S OFFICE AVAILABILITY, and OCCUPANCY

1. The Courthouse will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with access by the general public limited to the Courtland Street entrance.
2. The Office of the Clerk will be open to the public with restrictions to limit the concentration of individuals and allow social distancing. A drop box at the Courtland Street entrance is also available.

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

3. Court activities shall proceed with restrictions to limit the concentration of individuals and allow social distancing, consistent with guidance of the CDC or MDH or both.
4. The number of courtrooms used will be kept to the minimum level necessary to maintain court operations.
5. 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.
6. The Self-Help Center will be open from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. for pre-scheduled in-person appointments only. Telephone consultations and virtual conferences will be available from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Self-Help Center will continue to monitor telephone messages and will return calls with 24 hours. Contact information: 410-638-4916 or SelfHelpCtrHarford@mdcourts.gov.

DOCKETING AND SCHEDULING PRIORITIES

During Phase IV of the Court reopening process, the Court will resume hearing cases as indicated in the Administrative Order. Unless otherwise requested, 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 a computer *with a camera* will be needed. For those without access to the Internet, telephonic participation may be permitted if appropriate. Below is a schedule of when certain types of cases will be heard; specific times are noted for some matters.

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

Non-jury trials

Status conferences/pretrial matters: as currently scheduled; jury trials to be rescheduled

Bail reviews/arraignments/agreed criminal pleas: Monday to Friday at 1:30 p.m.

Violations of probation: scheduled on pre-designated days each month for each Judge

Expungement hearings: scheduled on the pre-designated days each month for each Judge

Deferred sentencing hearings: scheduled on pre-designated days each month for each Judge

Post-conviction hearings

Three-judge panel sentence reviews

FAMILY CASES

Trials

Motions with and w/o testimony

Contempt hearings: to be scheduled with a Judge

PL hearings: scheduled with Family Magistrates and Judges

Uncontested divorces: Tuesday mornings (Senior Judge)
Default hearings: Tuesday mornings (Senior Judge)
Exceptions: Thursday mornings
Protective orders: Temporary orders, when filed; Final orders, 7 days later
Peace order appeals and Extreme risk protective order appeals: Thursday mornings
Emergency: upon review only
Scheduling conferences; status conferences, and pendente lite (PL) hearings:
 Magistrate Hart—scheduled throughout the week
 Magistrate Hatem—Mondays and Thursdays, and other days for PL hearings
 Magistrate Walker—Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and other days for PL hearings
IV-D child support establishment agreement/paternity admissions: scheduled with attorneys for the Child Support Administration
Adoptions: scheduled with a Senior Judge

CIVIL CASES (with and without testimony)

Non-jury trials
On the record appeals: scheduled before a Judge
Civil motions: scheduled before a Judge
Civil pretrial conferences and settlement conferences: Thursdays and Fridays
AGC proceedings: scheduled with judge appointed by Court of Appeals

JUVENILE CASES

Closed trials and hearings scheduled before a judge or the Juvenile Magistrate
CINA: all matters and/or types of proceedings scheduled by the Juvenile Magistrate
Delinquency: all matters and/or types of proceeds scheduled by the Juvenile Magistrate

REGISTER OF WILLS

Scheduled Tuesdays and Thursdays before a Senior Judge

Remote hearings will be held in most cases, particularly those listed below:

Bail review hearings (will remain remote permanently)
Guardianship hearings
Civil motions, pretrial hearings and settlement hearings
Family Law Cases: UCDs, default hearings, exceptions, scheduling conferences
Other matters determined on a case by case basis by a Judge or Magistrate
Any other matters that can be scheduled, heard, or resolved remotely
See Guidelines for Remote Hearings See Attachment C.

Requests for in-person hearings will be decided on a case by case basis.

CONCLUSION

The Court will strive to hear all matters during Phase IV 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.

DATE: July 17, 2020
AS REVISED: February 24, 2021

/S/ ANGELA M. EAVES,
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE