

COVID-19 Family Law Case Processing

Pursuant to Chief Judge Barbera's April 14, 2020 Order, all courts in the Maryland Judiciary, have been restricted to emergency operations and closed with limited exceptions beginning on March 17, 2020, through June 5, 2020, pending further order of the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals. However, Courts may process matters that can be addressed without a proceeding and conduct certain remote proceedings.

Therefore, the Circuit Court for Howard County has temporarily amended family law case procedures as follows:

1. **Scheduling/Status Conferences**: If a conference has been scheduled between April 20, 2020 and June 5, 2020, the case may be able to proceed remotely. The family law office will convert all eligible hearings to a remote proceeding, the **date will remain the same as the previously scheduled date, however the time may change**. Counsel/parties will be emailed remote hearing information and no action from parties or counsel is necessary. Contact the family law office (410) 313-2403 or steven.ale@mdcourts.gov for more information.
2. **Uncontested/Default Hearings**: If an uncontested or default proceeding has been scheduled between April 20, 2020 and June 5, 2020, the case may be able to proceed remotely. The calendar management office will convert all eligible hearings to a remote proceeding, the **date will remain the same as the previously scheduled date, however the time may change**. Counsel/parties will be emailed remote hearing information and no action from parties or counsel is necessary. Contact the family law office (410) 313-2403 or kathleen.eyler@mdcourts.gov for more information.
3. **Settlement Conferences**: If a settlement conference has been scheduled between April 20, 2020 and June 5, 2020, the case may be able to proceed remotely. Based on availability of judicial resources, the Calendar Management Office will re-set some conferences and contact counsel/parties in some cases to determine if the conference will be converted to a remote proceeding. Contact the family law office (410) 313-2403 or kathleen.eyler@mdcourts.gov for more information.
4. **Magistrate Conference Calls**: If a case has been properly served, and there has been limited access, inadequate support, violation of an existing order or other urgent issue, a conference call may be requested. The **request form** must be completed and filed with the Clerk's Office. If the Request is granted, instructions regarding the call will be e-mailed to counsel/parties.

Contact the family law office with any procedural questions, (410) 313-2403 or kathleen.eyler@mdcourts.gov. Additionally, although walk-in self-help centers are temporarily **closed** to protect the health and safety of court visitors and staff. The Maryland Court Self-Help Center is still operating to help Marylanders with civil legal problems on the phone and by live chat. To speak with a lawyer, call 410-260-1392 or go to <https://mdcourts.gov/selfhelp/mcshc>.