



TWENTIETH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS
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MICHAEL T. MCHUGH
CHIEF JUDGE

SCOTT WILSKER
COURT ADMINISTRATOR

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Judges in the Twentieth Judicial Circuit
Amira Fox, State Attorney
Kathleen A. Smith, Public Defender
Ita Neymotin, Regional Counsel
Clerk of Courts of Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Hendry, and Glades Counties
Sheriffs of Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Hendry, and Glades Counties
County Managers of Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Hendry, and Glades Counties
Scott Wilsker, Trial Court Administrator

FROM: Michael T. McHugh, Chief Judge, Twentieth Judicial Circuit *MTM*

DATE: March 16, 2020

RE: COVID-19 – Civil and Family Law Court Proceedings

On March 13, 2020, Chief Justice Charles T. Canady issued Supreme Court of Florida Administrative Order No. AOSC20-13 directing that all Chief Judges of the courts continue ongoing efforts to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on the courts and court participants.

Chief Justice Canady directed that all grand jury proceedings, jury selection proceedings, and criminal and civil jury trials be suspended during the period beginning Monday, March 16, 2020 through Friday, March 27, 2020, or as provided by subsequent order.

Chief Justice Canady also directed that all rules of procedure, court orders, and opinions applicable to court proceedings that limit or prohibit the use of communication equipment for the conducting of proceedings by remote electronic means are suspended from the close of business on Friday, March 13, 2020, until the close of business on Friday, March 27, 2020, or as provided by subsequent order. In doing so, Chief Justice Canady authorized the Chief Judge of each judicial circuit to establish temporary procedures for the use, to the maximum extent feasible, of communication equipment for the conducting of proceeding by remote electronic means, as are necessary in their respective circuits due to the public health emergency.

In accordance with the directive of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Florida and in compliance with the goal of implementing policies to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, I, as Chief Judge of the Twentieth Judicial Circuit, hereby direct that:

All Civil and Family Law Court Events taking place within the Twentieth Judicial Circuit shall be Conducted by Remote Electronic Means in lieu of In-Person Appearances, with the Exception of Domestic Violence Injunction Hearings.

Presiding Civil and Family Law Judges are authorized to use any reasonable means necessary for the purpose of implementing this directive, including, but not limited to, the requirement that attorneys, parties and witnesses appear telephonically utilizing the services of CourtCall™ (www.courtcall.com or 888-882-6878) or CourtScribes™ (www.courtscribes.com or 833-727-4237).

Specifically as it relates to Family Law pending cases:

- All Family Law Trials are cancelled until further notice.
- All Family Law Non-Evidentiary hearings shall be telephonic.
- All Family Law Evidentiary hearings may be cancelled or held telephonically, at the sole discretion of the presiding judge on a case-by-case basis.
- Domestic Violence Injunction hearings shall continue as scheduled, at this time.

Attorneys, parties and witnesses with upcoming trials or hearings are advised to contact the appropriate judicial office with any questions.

This directive shall be in effect until further notice or until superseded by further order of this Court or the Florida Supreme Court.