



THE CHILD PROTECTION COURT OF THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY WEST
FIFTH ADMINISTRATIVE JUDICIAL REGION
100 N. CLOSNER BLVD, JUDICIAL ANNEX
EDINBURG, TEXAS 78539
(956) 318-2671

The Office of Court Administration and the Regional Presiding Judges have directed all Child Protection Courts to reschedule or postpone any non-essential hearings that are currently scheduled until at least April 1, 2020. The same directive recommended that the Child Protection Courts avoid the gathering of large groups of people by conducting essential hearings via telephone or video. Furthermore, the Supreme Court of Texas and the Court of Criminal Appeals of Texas have issued a First Emergency Order Regarding the COVID-19 State of Disaster which has instructed our court to allow anyone (other than a juror) including but not limited to a party, attorney, witness, or court reporter to appear remotely. In addition, we have been given the authority to consider as evidence sworn statements made out of court or sworn testimony given remotely.

ESSENTIAL HEARINGS:

Only *Ex Parte* Removal Hearings, Adversary Hearings, Special Hearings – Removals from Monitored Placements (child is already removed), and Trials with a dismissal deadline on or before April 1, 2020 shall be heard.

ALL ESSENTIAL HEARINGS SHALL BE HEARD VIA GOTOMEETING TELEPHONICALLY OR ONLINE:

NOTICE shall be given by Court through an ORDER RESETTING HEARING or an ORDER SETTING HEARING, filed with the Clerk, and emailed by the Court to all attorneys and guardians *ad litem*. The order shall include the date and time of the hearing, a web link, phone number, and meeting code.

NOTICE to Respondent Parents and Conservators of the ORDER RESETTING HEARING or ORDER SETTING HEARING shall also be given by respective attorneys and their respective CPS Caseworkers by informing them of the hearing.

A copy of the daily docket with call-in information for each hearing shall be posted for the public on the Courtroom door.

The virtual conference room will be available an hour earlier than the docketed time to allow the parties to confer.

Attorneys scheduled for telephonic hearings are expected to meet with their clients prior to that date, be punctual, and to announce to the Court if there is an agreement or if the matter will be contested. If no agreement can be reached, expect that the matter will go forward.

Attorneys whose clients who require an interpreter shall notify Court no later than 24 hours prior to the hearing.

ALL NON-ESSENTIAL HEARINGS SHALL BE RESET TO A DATE AFTER APRIL 1, 2020, WITH ALL PARTIES RECEIVING A NEW NOTICE OF SETTING.

While it is important to address the public health and safety issues raised by the COVID-19 pandemic, the public, litigants, children and attorneys must rest assured that the Court's primary focus will be protecting the Constitutional rights of all parties. If any party or attorney has any questions or requires guidance, please do not hesitate to contact the court at (956) 318-2671.



HON. CARLOS VILLALON, JR.
ASSOCIATE JUDGE PRESIDING