



Honorable Melissa McClenahan  
Associate Judge, Child Protection Courts  
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March 16, 2020

RE: Court Procedures for Coronavirus (*COVID19*)

To: Attorneys, CASA, DFPS & Court Staff

As you are aware, COVID19 is evolving rapidly and is having tremendous impacts on the judicial system. Courts have been instructed to take an active role in slowing the spread of the virus by limiting all “non-essential/emergency” hearings until at least April 1, 2020. It is my intent to hold Adversary, Non-Emergency removal hearings and Trials as scheduled and to utilize telephonic hearings where possible, resetting all others. The Supreme Court has authorized the “extension” of deadlines. This does NOT mean a 180 day extension. Dates are being extended for the purpose of conducting safe environments in which to hold those hearings. Motions to Extend Dismissal Date should be scheduled for a tele-conference with Karen. ***Expect all Trial settings to go according to this week’s and next week’s schedule. Absolutely no children or elderly are to be at any hearing.***

#### **Hearings scheduled for March 16-20, 2020**

For the Adversary, Non-Emergency removal hearings and Trials, only the absolutely necessary parties are to attend and those hearings will be held as ***currently scheduled.***

For Status, Initial Permanency and Permanency Reviews Before Final Orders, those hearings will be reset for a date beyond April 15, 2020. However, if any case can be handled by submitting agreed orders (signed by all parties or attorneys) via E-File, then I strongly suggest that you do so. I can sign orders on the Odyssey Queue, if you will alert Karen or myself to the fact that the order has been filed AND accepted.

All Permanency Reviews AFTER Final Order hearings will be conducted telephonically, via conference call at the times currently set. Karen will be in contact with you to provide instructions on attending those calls.

For MTP’s, Service Reviews, Motions & other hearings not listed above, those will be reset to a date beyond June 1, 2020.

#### **Hearings scheduled for March 23-31, 2020**

For the Adversary, Non-Emergency removal hearings and Trials, only the absolutely necessary parties are to attend and those hearings will be held on the scheduled dates. ***However, the time may be changed. Please monitor the Docket Sheet and confirm times prior to arriving at the courthouse.***

For Status, Initial Permanency and Permanency Before Final Orders, those hearings will be reset for a date beyond June 1, 2020. However, if any case can be handled by submitting agreed orders (signed by all parties or attorneys) via E-File, then I strongly suggest that you do so. I can sign orders on the Odyssey Queue, if you will alert Karen to the fact that the order has been filed AND accepted.

All Permanency Reviews AFTER Final Order hearings will be conducted telephonically, via conference call. **Those dates and times are subject to change.** Karen will be in contact with you to provide dates, times and instructions on attending those calls.

For MTP's, Service Reviews, Motions & other hearings not listed above, those will be reset to a date beyond June 15, 2020 or the next scheduled hearing for that case.

#### **Hearings scheduled after April 1, 2020**

No changes are being made to the current April docket. However, with the rapid nature of changes this situation caused, please be aware that dockets will most likely be impacted and rescheduled accordingly. You can expect to be updated by this court as those changes are made.

#### **PARENT-CHILD VISITS**

As of today, March 16, 2020, all parent-child visits will be held as planned. However, if a parent or child has a fever and is displaying flu-like symptoms, please cancel and reschedule. I anticipate further guidance will follow. If any change is made, you will be notified immediately.

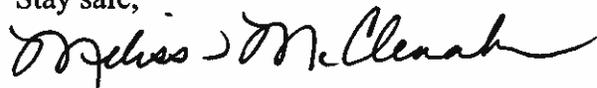
#### **MEDIATIONS, FGC'S, PPC'S, ETC.**

Attorneys and mediators are willing and able to conduct mediations via telephone and/or video conference. Please consider taking advantage of this option.

The Department will have guidelines for access to their buildings pursuant to that agency's protocol.

Please be patient as we work to accommodate and keep everyone safe. Keep in mind...should a courthouse officially close, all hearings will be reset and you will be provided an updated docket.

Stay safe,



Judge Melissa McClenahan