

17th JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT

EUGENE G. DOHERTY
CHIEF JUDGE



WINNEBAGO COUNTY COURTHOUSE
400 WEST STATE STREET - ROOM 215
ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS 61101
PHONE 815-319-4800

PRESS RELEASE

Date: April 6, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Thomas Jakeway
Trial Court Administrator
Tel. (815) 319-4806

REDUCED COURT OPERATIONS CONTINUE

To deal with concerns about the coronavirus, the 17th Circuit Court has extended its period of reduced operations until May 18, 2020, when it hopes to be able to resume normal operations. The Court's reduced operations eliminate all court proceedings, though the following matters are still being undertaken:

- Filings may still be made with the Circuit Clerk, either online or in person.
- Emergency orders of protection will still be received in the Clerk's office or via an online portal at <http://www.illinoisprotectionorder.org/OOP/> and be heard.
- The Court will continue to hear matters which it deems essential and time sensitive.
- All jury trials and bench trials are continued to no sooner than May 18, 2020. Hearings on orders of protection may be heard if the judge determines that the matter is urgent and time-sensitive.
- Time-sensitive juvenile court matters will still be heard.
- Emergency matters of a time-sensitive nature can still be heard.
- Criminal court volume is significantly reduced.
- The Court is open to hearing more matters via videoconference and telephone, and has already begun doing so.

Chief Judge Eugene Doherty said that the Court's reduced activity is difficult, but necessary. "Much of our focus has been on efficiency and timeliness, and it is not easy to give those objectives a lower priority. However, we know that doing so is essential to public health."

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STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
COUNTY OF BOONE
COUNTY OF WINNEBAGO

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 2020-18
TEMPORARY ORDER - COVID-19 PROCEDURE
All Case Types

Effective April 20, 2020, and until May 18, 2020, the following procedures are being implemented in connection with all Winnebago and Boone County cases as a response to the COVID-19 public health concerns in our community:

A. Orders of Protection and Stalking/No Contact Orders:

1. All emergency orders of protection petitions will continue to be heard. Plenary hearings may be heard at the discretion of the assigned judge if the urgent nature of the circumstances demand it. Electronic hearings are encouraged for any such plenary hearings (see section E, below). Continuation of plenary hearings by agreement to a date after May 17, 2020, is encouraged.
2. Emergency petitions may be presented online and heard via telephone.

B. Civil and Family: (excluding orders of protection and Stalking/No Contact Orders):

1. All court dates currently set between April 20, 2020, and May 15, 2020, are hereby canceled and will be continued to a date falling after June 1, 2020. This includes all dates currently scheduled for status, first return, argument, hearing, decision, bench trial or jury trial. All cases will eventually be given a new date for status, and parties will be notified by mail. Plenary hearings on orders of protection and stalking/no contact orders falling within this period remain set until the judge presiding determines they should be moved.
2. With the agreement of the judge presiding over the case, matters involving exigent circumstances may be set on a date less than 60 days out with court approval. To request an emergency hearing, an attorney shall email the assigned judge, including all counsel in the email chain. The party requesting such a hearing must be able to articulate in the email the emergent nature of the circumstances and why a delay in hearing would be prejudicial. The assigned judge will determine if the matter qualifies as an emergency and set the matter accordingly via the email chain.

3. Agreed settings for non-emergency argument, motion, etc.: For matters which are already positioned for argument or decision at a non-evidentiary hearing, the parties may *mutually* request such a hearing from the judge presiding in that matter. The presiding judge will decide whether granting a hearing is appropriate. Use of electronic means to conduct the hearing will likely be required (see paragraph E, below).
4. Self-represented litigants shall continue to file motions with the Circuit Clerk's office. All requests for an emergency hearing shall be in writing and clearly labeled as "emergency", and will be forwarded by the Circuit Clerk to the presiding judge for ruling or scheduling.

C. Criminal and Juvenile:

1. Criminal and Juvenile Courts will be restricting their activity to only essential and time-sensitive matters. The determination as to which matters are essential will be made by the judge presiding over a particular case.
2. As to court dates set between April 20, 2020, and May 17, 2020, each judge will determine matters can be continued, and such cases will be given a new date falling no earlier than May 18, 2020. Defendants' presence will be readily excused in proceedings until May 18, 2020. Attorneys and litigants are encouraged to work with each other and the judge presiding in the applicable courtroom to continue all non-essential matters to a date falling after June 1, 2020, the latter date being chosen to give the court maximum flexibility in the event this order must be extended.

D. All Trials Continued:

1. In conformity with the Order of the Illinois Supreme Court in in M.R. 30370, issued March 20, 2020, no trials, bench or jury, may proceed in the 17th Judicial Circuit before Monday, May 18, 2020. This order applies to all civil, family, and criminal cases, but it does not apply to hearings on orders of protection or stalking/no contact orders or necessary juvenile hearings.
2. Dates set for trial on any judge's calendar falling prior to May 18, 2020, remain on the judge's calendar at the judge's discretion, but they will not proceed to trial. Pursuant to the Supreme Court Court's Order, in criminal trials the period of delay as a result of this "pause" shall not be attributable to either the State or the defendant for purposes of 725 ILCS 5/103-5.

- E. Mode of Hearing:** For any matters continuing in any courtroom, it is the Court's preference that parties appear via some electronic means (e.g., video conference or telephone conference) if possible. For any hearing conducted in person in the courthouse, persons appearing there are required to remain seated at counsel table or behind available lecterns with safe distances (6-10 feet) between themselves and any other persons in the courtroom. While parties have a right to be present whenever a case is called, during the COVID-19 crisis counsel should *strongly discourage* clients from attending hearings unless their presence is essential to the hearing.

This order remains in effect until May 18, 2020, or further order of the court. To give flexibility for extension of this order if necessary, matters will be rescheduled to dates falling after June 1, 2020. The court will continue to review and adjust this order as is necessary.

ENTER: 
Eugene G. Doherty, Chief Judge

DATED: 4/6/20