



State of Illinois
Circuit Court of Cook County

Chambers of
Timothy C. Evans
Chief Judge

50 West Washington Street
Suite 2600
Richard J. Daley Center
Chicago, Illinois 60602
(312) 603-6000

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PRESS RELEASE
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CONTACT:

Pat Milhizer, Director of Communications
Office of the Chief Judge
Circuit Court of Cook County
(312) 603-5160
pat.milhizer@cookcountyil.gov

Chief Judge Evans postpones most cases for 30 days due to coronavirus

CHICAGO (March 13, 2020) – Many criminal and civil cases in the Circuit Court of Cook County will be postponed for a 30-day period starting Tuesday (March 17) due to the spread of the coronavirus, Chief Judge Timothy C. Evans announced today.

Court operations will proceed as scheduled on Monday (March 16). The 30-day period runs from March 17 through April 15.

Chief Judge Evans took this action after consulting with the court's 17 presiding judges, the county board president, state's attorney, public defender, sheriff, clerk of the circuit court and representatives of local bar associations.

"We are modifying court operations to protect the public, court staff and the judiciary," Chief Judge Evans said. "We will continue to identify the appropriate balance between allowing access to justice and minimizing the threat to public health. I am also asking everybody in the justice system to exercise patience and flexibility as we move forward in these unpredictable times. This is an unprecedented situation, and we may need to make more changes in the days ahead."

No jury trials in criminal or civil matters will begin in the 30 days. Individuals who have been summoned to jury duty from March 17 through April 15 should not report for jury duty. They will receive a new date for service.

Grand jury proceedings will continue during the 30 days, and the proceedings may be held in courtrooms to provide more space and distance between people. Individuals who are currently serving in grand jury proceedings must report to court.

For all adult criminal cases, all trials and many hearings scheduled for the 30 days are postponed to a future date. Hearings that will proceed in the 30 days include bail hearings, arraignments and preliminary hearings. In addition, defendants may continue to enter into plea agreements to conclude their case. Any pretrial defendant may also request a bail review during this time.

In addition, for the 30 days, low-risk and medium-risk adults on probation do not need to meet with their probation officer in person. Probation officers have contacted clients to inform them that they will schedule meetings to be held either via video conferencing or phone conversation. Clients deemed high-risk will still be required to report to their probation officers in person.

All traffic and misdemeanor matters scheduled in the 30 days are postponed to a future date.

For delinquency and criminal proceedings involving juveniles, the only matters that will occur during the 30 days are demands for trial and detention hearings that determine if a juvenile is held in custody while the case is pending.

Judges will hear cases of child abuse or neglect in which the state seeks protective custody of a child, and judges will hear emergency motions in which children are allegedly abused in foster care.

For domestic violence matters, petitioners may seek orders of protection during the 30 days. Litigants may also seek an order of protection related to an existing civil domestic relations case (such as dissolution of marriage). Emergency petitions may also be filed in child-support matters.

For the 30-day period, all civil matters not deemed an emergency by party agreement are postponed to a future date. Emergency requests in civil matters will be permitted.

No orders for an eviction or foreclosure will be entered during the 30-day period.

Civil lawsuits may still be filed in person or via electronic filing.

For the 30 days, all courthouse Children's Rooms will be closed. Individuals who have court business should not bring children to court.

After marriage ceremonies conclude Monday, March 16, judges will not perform marriage ceremonies during the 30-day period.

Though there will be fewer cases, all courthouses will remain open for the 30 days. Court employees who do not need to be in a courtroom or office will be encouraged to work remotely during this time.

In addition, the Circuit Court of Cook County is following the guidance of the Illinois Supreme Court, and signs will be posted at all courthouses to indicate that the following individuals should not enter any courthouse if they:

- Have been in any of the following countries with the last 21 days: China, South Korea, Italy, Japan, Iran; or
- Reside or have close contact with anyone who has been in one of those countries listed above within the last 21 days; or
- Have been directed to quarantine, isolate or self-monitor at home for the coronavirus by any medical provider; or
- Have been diagnosed with, or have had close contact with anyone diagnosed with, COVID-19; or
- Have flu-like symptoms including fever, cough or shortness of breath.

Chief Judge Evans understands that one of these conditions may apply to a person who plans to attend a court hearing that is permitted during the 30-day period. He is following the guidance of the Illinois Supreme Court and asking the judiciary to make reasonable accommodations and reschedule matters for individuals who cannot enter a courthouse due to one of the aforementioned reasons.

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