

Court Operations During COVID-19 Pandemic

We recognize the current COVID-19 pandemic is causing disruption to the routine daily operations of the courts and to the practice of law. We also know you have many questions and concerns regarding the timeline of your cases moving through the judicial process. With this in mind, we are balancing the needs and rights of parties with the safety, health and lives of the individuals who appear before us, our staff, and the members of our community.

In order to address your concerns and provide as much direction and information as possible, we have set forth our current functioning structure below in order to assist you moving forward. However, please recognize that the situation with the pandemic, and the court functions, may change daily, and even hourly. Keeping the fluid nature of the situation in mind here is the following current status of court procedures:

1. Judges are presiding over only essential matters from now through May 31, 2020. All non-essential matters have been continued. This date could be shortened or lengthened as information on the pandemic unfolds. Essential matters include TPO's, PPO's, emergency restraining protection orders ("ERPO"), motions to restrict, certain mental health hearings, certain D&N proceedings, emergency guardianship and special conservatorship petitions, juvenile delinquency bond and first appearance hearings, criminal bond and first appearance hearings, criminal sentencings that result in a defendant being released from custody.
2. We currently have a duty judge, a district civil judge, a district criminal judge, and a county court judge within the Justice Center. When an individual appears at the Justice Center the duty judge determines if the issue is an essential matter and if so, it is referred to one of these judges.
3. Our Clerk's Office is operating with minimal staff. This includes our Clerk of Court and 4-5 supervisors. They are alternating weeks so at any given time we have 3 supervisors working in the Clerk's Office.
4. Remaining staff are not reporting to work nor are they working from home. Therefore, calls and emails to the individual divisions will not be returned. These employees are currently scheduled to return to work on April 20, 2020 subject to change.
5. All civil hearings/trials and domestic relations hearings scheduled for April and May 2020 have been continued. We will reassess the situation in late April to determine if hearings/trials beyond May 2020 will need to be continued. We will look at resetting those hearings/trials, along with any trial management conferences, discovery or motions hearings, after we determine when it will be safe to resume a normal trial schedule.

6. Most criminal trials have been continued until a date after May 31, 2020. Exceptions for certain speedy trial matters are being addressed on a case by case basis.

7. Judges continue to work remotely, but without the assistance of a judicial assistant or law clerk. Judges are reviewing pleadings and drafting orders. However, you may see longer timeframes for the issuance of orders as all judges are participating in addressing district wide issues related to the pandemic. Additionally, it may take many days for a pleading to be “accepted” through ICESS, as there are only a very limited number of staff supervisors handling all essential matters while also trying to accept pleadings and calendar cases.

8. All deadlines under the Colorado Rules of Criminal Procedures and Colorado Rules of Civil Procedure remain in effect. In the event you require an enlargement of time due to a COVID-19 issue you will need to file a motion requesting the same, after conferral with the opposing party.

9. Our probation department is working remotely. Although there have been some changes to monitoring, officers continue with client contacts, at times, with more contacts than had been occurring prior to the closure. In-custody PSIs are being completed as scheduled and all alcohol evaluations (both pre-plea and pre-sentence) are still being completed, albeit via phone interview.

We appreciate your understanding and cooperation. We wish for all of you that you and your loved ones remain healthy and safe during this difficult time.