

**IN THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT
CASS AND JOHNSON COUNTIES, MISSOURI**

Administrative Order 2020 - 0326

ORDER

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have declared that the outbreak of COVID-19 is a worldwide pandemic, and the President of the United States has declared a nationwide State of Emergency and the Governor of the State of Missouri has declared a statewide State of Emergency ; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative to take steps to protect the health and safety of all employees of the 17th Judicial Circuit, all judicial officers and all attorneys and parties who have court hearings or other business in this Judicial Circuit while also balancing the rights of all said individuals and parties to litigation; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate and necessary to take quick action to reduce the possibility of exposure to COVID-19 and to reduce the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the unprecedented circumstances existing at this time warrant this administrative action; and

WHEREAS, countless governmental entities and private businesses have implemented numerous immediate actions and modifications to their normal course of business; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding the fact that the Court will remain open, it is imperative that the Court take steps to protect the health and safety of all employees of the Court, all judicial officers, all attorneys, all litigants, all victims, all witnesses and any other individuals or entities who have cases and hearings pending in Court, while also balancing the rights of all said individuals to have their matters heard; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding the fact that the Court will remain open, the Court's operations are and will be significantly modified during the term of the outbreak; and

WHEREAS, a large gathering of individuals without necessary mitigation for the spread of infection may pose a risk of the spread of infectious disease; and

WHEREAS, the Missouri Supreme Court entered an Order dated March 16, 2020 together with other Orders regarding on-going court operations and his instructed courts in this state to "prepare for potential infection in their community"; and

WHEREAS, the Missouri Supreme Court has directed its courts to "consider strategies to prevent the spread of respiratory germs into, within, and between facilities"; and

WHEREAS, the Missouri Supreme Court suspended all in-person proceedings with certain identified exceptions and the Missouri Supreme Court authorized the Presiding Judge of each Circuit to determine the manner in which hearings are to be conducted, including the discretion to excuse individuals from appearing; and

WHEREAS, circumstances regarding COVID-19 have changed dramatically since the March 16, 2020 Order of the Missouri Supreme Court, necessitating the Missouri Supreme Court's entry of a new Order dated March 22, 2020. The changes include but are not limited to those circumstances set forth in the Court's Order, regarding the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the Court desires to employ additional necessary and reasonable measures to protect the general public, litigants, lawyers, employees and all other individuals from the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the Presiding Judge of the Court has the administrative authority over dockets of the Court and the administrative and discretionary authority regarding the manner in which any hearings are conducted in the Court.

WHEREAS, the Court finds that the compliance with current court orders is an essential activity. Parenting plans, including exchanges of minor children between parents, remain valid orders, previously found to be in the minor children's best interests. Joint legal custody parents may make other agreements they deem to be in the children's best interests. Court ordered exchanges shall occur as stated in parenting plan unless the parents agree otherwise in writing. Family Courts remain open. Contact your division if you need further guidance. The following guidelines shall be followed concerning other parenting time:

1. Supervised parenting time through third-party providers shall continue if it can be done remotely or virtually following the CDC guidelines. Parents shall be cooperative and flexible with each other and their service provider.
2. Supervised exchanges through third-party providers shall continue and shall be done in compliance with CDC guidelines. Parents shall be cooperative and flexible with each other and their service providers as protocols are modified.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, effective immediately and continuing through 5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 24, 2020, unless modified or extended in a subsequent administrative order, all Parenting Plans currently in place shall be followed unless written agreement between parties are received by the Court.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

March 26, 2020
Date

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Will Collins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Honorable William B. Collins
Presiding Judge of the 17th Judicial Circuit