

24th Judicial District Court

Parish of Jefferson

State of Louisiana

ORDER 2020 – 006

Acting in accordance with Louisiana Constitution Article V, Section 1; pursuant to LSA RS. 1:55; due to the COVID-19 emergency as detailed in Governor John Bel Edwards's Declarations of Public Health Emergency, Jefferson Parish President Cynthia Lee Sheng's Declaration of State of Emergency, and the Louisiana Supreme Court's Order on April 22, 2020, and in accordance with the inherent powers of this court, and in consideration of ongoing public health recommendations to reduce the risk of exposure to the virus and slowing the spread of the disease while balancing the need to protect the constitutional rights and public safety of the citizens of the state by maintaining access to Louisiana courts, the Chief Judge, acting on behalf of the Judges of the 24th Judicial District Court,

HEREBY ORDERS THAT:

1.

The Thomas F. Donelon Courthouse will remain closed to the public until 8:00 a.m. on Monday, **May 18, 2020**.

2.

All criminal and civil jury trials are suspended until **July 1, 2020**.

3.

All criminal matters scheduled during the period of closure for defendants who are not incarcerated, are continued. Those criminal defendants with notice to appear during the period of closure are ordered to report to the 24th Judicial District Court in person before **July 1, 2020** to receive service for a new court date. Notice will be provided by a clerk stationed at the entrance to the courthouse on or after May 18, 2020, Monday – Friday between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Criminal defendants with notice to appear on or after May 18, 2020 should report on their scheduled court date only.

Criminal matters for incarcerated individuals shall proceed by video conference.

4.

All civil matters scheduled after **May 1, 2020**, including hearing officer conferences, shall proceed by video conference via the Court's "Zoom" platform, absent a showing of good cause as to why in person appearance is necessary. Should a party fail to timely appear via video conference without just cause, the conference will go forward. The Court is well-equipped and prepared to handle matters that require remote witness testimony. For further instructions, please refer to the Court's website www.courtonline.us.

5.

In civil matters, the parties' virtual appearance shall not suspend any deadlines to submit: (a) Memoranda in support or opposition or reply, (b) Written Objections to the Hearing Officer Recommendations, (c) Hearing Officer Conference Affidavits, (d) Monthly Income and Expense Lists, and/or (e) any other forms or documentation required for the parties' appearance.

6.

Public access to court proceedings is available. Consult the Court's website for instructions www.courtonline.us.

7.

Non-emergency civil pleadings and motions shall be filed by electronic means only. In addition to e-filing documents through the JeffNet system, civil and criminal documents may be filed by fax. For emergency filings and/or those filings which cannot be accomplished through JeffNet or by fax filing, the Clerk's Office is open and available to accept filings in person by appointment only. However, electronic filing for emergencies is strongly encouraged. Electronically filed emergency pleadings shall be placed in the judge's e-sign basket for expeditious handling.

8.

Any and all preliminary or permanent injunctions, protective orders, temporary restraining orders, ex parte protective orders, and/or criminal stay away orders issued pursuant to R.S. 9:361 et seq., R.S. 9:372, R.S. 46:1846, R.S. 46:2131 et seq., R.S. 46:2151, R.S. 46:2171 et seq., R.S. 46:2181 et seq., Children's Code Article 1564 et seq., Code of Civil Procedure Articles 3604 and/or 3607.1, and/or Code of Criminal Procedure Articles 30, 320, and/or 871.1 which have been issued by this Court and which would expire on or between the dates of March 13,

2020 and May 30, 2020 are hereby EXTENDED until at least 4:30 p.m. on **July 1, 2020**. Service may be requested. This Court's prior orders respecting this issue remain in effect and applicable.

9.

Absent further notice, the courthouse will re-open **May 18, 2020** with the following Phase I restrictions:

- A. All individuals seeking entry into the courthouse will be pre-screened. Pre-screening may include taking of temperatures by a licensed technician. Criminal defendants denied admittance will be given a new date by the clerk stationed near the entrance of the courthouse.
- B. Criminal defendants who had court dates scheduled during the period of closure, will be issued service for new court dates by the clerk stationed near the entrance to the courthouse.
- C. Only noticed criminal defendants with a scheduled court appearance and individuals otherwise authorized by a judge shall be allowed to enter the courthouse.
- D. All individuals entering the courthouse shall be required to wear a mask. Those who report without a mask will be provided a mask while supplies last.
- E. Elevators shall be limited to a maximum of 4 persons.
- F. Hallways and corridors shall be clear and are to be used for access only. Social distancing shall be observed. Those waiting to be heard shall wait in the attorney client rooms adjacent to the division courtroom, limit 2 people per room.
- G. Each courtroom shall be limited to a maximum of 10 persons, including the judge and judge's staff. Social distancing shall be observed.
- H. Criminal matters involving defendants who are incarcerated shall continue to proceed via video conference.
- I. Judges are strongly encouraged to stagger their dockets to limit court appearances of criminal defendants not incarcerated to no more than 10 defendants per hour and to utilize the Sine Pro app to limit the number of people in the courthouse.
- J. Divisions should schedule no more than 50 criminal defendants per day.
- K. Any party (criminal defendant, civil plaintiff, or civil defendant), attorney, witness, law enforcement officer, or visitor with business in the courthouse shall be required to

download the free Sine Pro app on their cell phones. Sine Pro is a remote check-in system that will allow an individual to remain in their vehicle or otherwise outside of the courthouse but within the immediate vicinity of the courthouse, until their case is called. Individuals are to use the Sine Pro app to check in when they arrive at the courthouse.

Apple iPhone: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/sine-pro/id1086883094>

Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=co.sine.sinecloud.pass>

Those experiencing any problems may also open the app and scan the QR codes on iPads provided at the entrance to the courthouse to check in. Individuals will receive a text minutes before their case is called instructing them to report to the courtroom. Individuals are required to be on time and remain in the vicinity of the courthouse until their case is called. **Notice to appear in court is satisfied only by actual appearance in court on the record.**

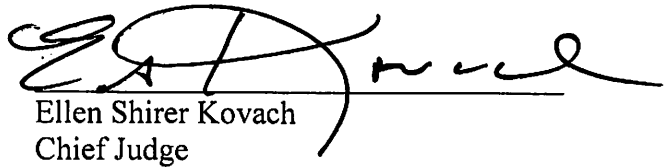
- L. Criminal defense attorneys are encouraged to waive their client's presence for all stages of the proceeding that would not require a defendant's appearance.
- M. Attorneys shall complete all forms, including but not limited to boykin forms, specialty court contracts, stay away orders, diversion referrals, and hearing officer conference forms prior to the date and time scheduled for appearance/hearing.
- N. In criminal matters, attorneys are strongly encouraged to attend court via video conference whenever possible.
- O. All civil matters shall continue to proceed via video conference only, absent a showing of good cause. (See paragraph 5 above).
- P. All judges, court clerks, attorneys, and parties (criminal defendants, civil plaintiffs, or civil defendants) are strongly encouraged to limit in-person courtroom contact as much as possible by utilizing available technologies, including but not limited to Zoom video conferencing, Acuity online calendar notifications, Sine Pro check in, and JeffNet e-filing or fax filing.
- Q. This Order expressly does not prohibit any court proceedings by telephone, video conferencing, or any other means that do not involve in-person contact. This Order does not affect the court's consideration of matters that can be resolved without in-person proceedings.

10.

This Order is effective at 8:00 a.m. on Friday **May 1, 2020** and will remain in effect until further notice. All provisions of this Court's prior orders shall remain in place except as expressly modified herein. Adjustments to this Order, if necessary, will be posted on the Court's website (www.courtonline.us or www.24jdc.us), the Louisiana Supreme Court website (www.lasc.org), and in the news media.

Gretna, Louisiana this 29th day of April, 2020.

For the 24th Judicial District Court


Ellen Shirer Kovach
Chief Judge