

April 7, 2020 Update on District Court Procedures

Good Morning to everyone. Recent CDC guidelines reflect updated recommendations to address the spread of COVID-19. Recommendations include use of cloth face-covering as well as maintaining social distancing to diminish the spread of the virus through community-based transmission.

As the scope of risk expands to everyone, the District Court is making some operational modifications. The purpose of these changes is to maximize protections to litigants, lawyers, and court staff while ensuring that the essential functions of the court continue.

Courtrooms Locked

- Courtroom proceedings will be by remote access.
- Lawyers and litigants will not be permitted into the physical courtrooms.
- If an emergency hearing is granted, the clerk's office will contact the parties/counsel to schedule a day and time for the hearing.
- For scheduled DV hearings only, exhibits, documents, photos will be received via dedicated email address.
- dvdockets@mdcourts.gov has been created for the limited purpose of emailing exhibits to the court for scheduled emergency DV hearings during the State of Emergency.
- Language-Line interpreters may be used for foreign language needs
- The judge will initiate a remote communication with the parties.
- Orders will be provided via US Mail, and/or email (as well as to the Sheriff).

Petitions for Emergency Evaluation to be Filed in Commissioners' Office

- Petitioners seeking emergency evaluation will be initiated in the Commissioners' office
- After filing, the daytime-duty-judge will be contacted by the Commissioner.
- The daytime-duty-judge will complete the EEP proceeding remotely.

Consistent with section (j) of the April 3, 2020 Court of Appeals order, motions for emergency hearings can be filed in the locked lobby-box (checked hourly 8:30 am – 4:30 pm) or via US Mail.

These processes will allow me to have fewer employees on the court premises. The processes are necessarily slower than our traditional docket pace. These modifications are necessary for the greater health issues presented by the pandemic. Thank you for your understanding of these necessary measures.

Sincerely,

Patricia Mitchell
District Court Administrative Judge

