


THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS MUSKINGUM COUNTY  
DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISION

**MEMORANDUM**

22 N. 5th Street  
Zanesville, OH 43701-3503

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**TO:** *Attorneys*

**FROM:** *Jeff Hooper* 

**DATE:** *March 24, 2020*

**RE:** *Public Health Emergency*

In compliance with the executive order 2020-01D "declaring a state of emergency" issued by Governor Mike DeWine on March 9, 2020 new protocols and procedures are being implemented for the Muskingum County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations Division and the Muskingum County Clerk of Courts Office assigned to that Court. These new protocols and procedures will be effective 8:00 a.m. Wednesday March 25, 2020.

Most hearings in the Domestic Relations Court through April 17, 2020 will be continued. The primary exception are hearings on Petitions for Domestic Violence Civil Protection Orders. New hearing notices will be sent out which may also include new pretrial filing deadlines. For any cases set on April 20, 2020 and thereafter all pretrial filing deadlines currently remain in effect. Pretrials for cases where all parties have counsel may be conducted telephonically. You will receive notice of this change if applicable.

The Court will continue to receive new filings including opening new cases, requests for civil protection orders, motions for temporary orders including *ex parte* orders and continuances. However, in most cases the Court will follow provisions of Civil Rule 75(N) in considering temporary order requests and *ex parte* order requests upon Affidavits. Therefore, supporting Affidavits should be extensive, accurate and complete. Proposed Judgment Entries should accompany all motions requesting relief.

Access to the Domestic Relations Clerk of Courts division will be limited. Access for the purpose of filing pleadings or obtaining service copies will not be permitted. The Clerk has provided a designated area inside the front door of the Richard D. Hixson Court and Government Services Building into which all

pleadings for filing are to be deposited. All pleadings must be placed in an appropriate sized envelope and placed in the designated tray. Pleadings and documents being returned to the attorney's offices will still be placed in attorney's mailboxes but those will likewise be located inside the front door of the Hixson Building. Request for copy forms are also located on the first floor of the building and they should be filled out and left in the Clerk's tray. If you believe you need personal access to the Clerk's Office or are paying by cash or credit card or you feel you need access for any other specific reason, please call the Clerk's Office to make arrangements to meet with them.

This decision to restrict Court operations was not taken lightly. I recognize that the stress level of everyone is high right now as we deal with this public health issue. Delaying access to the Courts for matters which are of the utmost importance to the individuals involved will add anxiety to our already stressed litigants. For this I am truly sorry. However, I need to balance the need of people to have access to justice with the health and safety of my staff, their families and the families of the litigants. These restrictions will go on no longer than they absolutely have to and hopefully will conclude sooner rather than later.

Please know that I will remain available daily if you have questions or concerns. You may access me through the Court's primary number during regular business hours or my cell phone 740-819-2058. During this time I have asked Magistrate Tompkins to remain out of the office as he cares for his father who is elderly and has underlying health concerns. To the best of my ability I will try to address any questions you may have about cases you have with him and I am certain he too will make himself available by phone on any issues that would need to be resolved before these restrictions are lifted.

Please practice good social distancing and health practices to keep yourself and your families and your staff during these trying times.