

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG
IN THE GENERAL DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG
IN THE JUVENILE AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS COURT FOR THE CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG

ORDER TEMPORARILY SUSPENDING IN-PERSON COURT PROCEEDINGS

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Orders of the Supreme Court of Virginia and the States of Emergency declared by the President of the United States and the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the judges of the Circuit, General District and the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts of the City of Fredericksburg located in the 15th Judicial Circuit do hereby order as follows:

1. All Courts will remain open.
2. The Clerks offices will be open on a limited basis for essential and emergency matters only. Personnel will also be available to respond to telephonic inquiries and to process electronic filings, if available.
3. All in-person proceedings in all Courts are suspended from the beginning of business April 27, 2020 through May 17, 2020 subject to the exceptions below:
 - Proceedings necessary to protect constitutional rights of criminal defendants, including bond-related matters and plea agreements for incarcerated individuals;
 - Proceedings related to relief from abuse, including but not limited to orders of protection;
 - Proceedings related to emergency child custody orders;
 - Department of Children's Services emergency matters related to child protection;
 - Proceedings related to petitions for temporary injunctive relief;
 - Proceedings related to emergency mental health orders;
 - Proceedings related to emergency protection of elderly or vulnerable persons;
 - Proceedings directly related to the COVID-19 public health emergency;
 - Other exceptions as approved by a Judge of that Court;
 - Proceedings related to Drug Court sanctions.
4. The Judges of each Court are hereby authorized to determine the manner in which in person court proceedings for the exceptions listed above are to be conducted.
5. Any permitted in court proceedings shall be limited to attorneys, parties, necessary witnesses, interpreters, the press, court personnel, court reporters, security officers, and other necessary persons, as determined by the trial judge.
6. Throughout the suspension period there shall be a liberal continuance policy.
7. Anyone who is ill or believes they have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus should remain home and contact the clerk's office by telephone or email.

Judges are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that core constitutional functions and rights are protected. Additionally, court clerks are charged with ensuring the court functions continue. Nevertheless, all judges and court clerks are urged to limit in-person courtroom contact as much as possible by utilizing available technologies, including alternative means of filing, teleconferencing, email, and video conferencing.

This Order does not limit any court's consideration of matters that can be resolved without in-person proceedings.

This Order is intended to be interpreted broadly for the protection of the public from the risks associated with COVID-19.

This Order may be shortened, modified, or extended as circumstances dictate.