



COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
PIKE COUNTY
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GREGORY H. CHELAK
PRESIDENT JUDGE
KELLY A. GAUGHAN
JUDGE

SAMANTHA VENDITTI, ESQ.
COURT ADMINISTRATOR

Date: March 16, 2020

To: Members of the Pike County Bar and for Public Release

Subject: Court of Common Pleas of Pike County Public Health Emergency Response—
Coronavirus/COVID-19

President Judge Gregory H. Chelak, in consultation with Judge Kelly A. Gaughan, has authorized the distribution of this memo outlining the below policies, restrictions, and/or mitigation strategies.

Effective immediately and until further notice, the Court has adopted the following mitigation strategies:

- ***Members of the Bar and the public, especially those experiencing illness symptoms, should not visit the Courthouse unless absolutely necessary or as required by Order of Court.***
- If you are court ordered to appear at a court proceeding, you still must appear, unless the matter has been rescheduled or vacated, or your presence has been excused by Court Administration.
- **Filing:** When possible use email and electronic means to create and transmit documents to the Court. For the interim two week period of time only, the Court shall be suspending Pike County Local Rule 205.2(a)(2)(ii) & (iii). Specifically, the Court Administrator is specifically granting permission pursuant to Pike County Local Rule 205.2(a)(1)(iii), to allow original filings, not requiring a filing fee and intended for the Prothonotary, Clerk of Courts and Clerk of the Orphans Court to be presented to the Court via Court Administration's facsimile at 570-296-6054 or Court Administration's public email address at pikecourts@gmail.com. All filings of this nature MUST go through Court Administration to be accepted and to be deemed filed with the Court.
- **Probation & Domestic Relations Proceedings:** Please contact the Probation and Domestic Relations Offices by telephone before visiting to determine the status of any

visit or conference you may have scheduled. All parties shall be encouraged to submit online applications for the intake process.

- **Court Proceedings**

- **Jury** : The trial scheduled to take place on March 19, 2020 has been cancelled upon motion of a party. The Jury Selection scheduled to take place on March 23, 2020 has been cancelled upon motion of a party. All jurors scheduled to report for that selection have been excused. The April 20-27, 2020 Civil Trials remain scheduled as planned, but their status will be evaluated at a future date. The May 8, 2020 Jury Selection also remains scheduled as planned, but its status will be evaluated at a future date.
 - Jurors previously selected for a trial, shall report as originally summoned unless otherwise instructed by Court Administration.
- **Non-essential Civil hearings** are being rescheduled to a future date. Scheduling will be adjusted ASAP and no later than March 23, 2020 by Court Order.
- **Scheduling of large court lists (Criminal Day, Argument, etc.)** will be staggered scheduling. Scheduling will be adjusted ASAP and no later than March 23, 2020 by Court Order.
- **Juvenile Court** will be staggered scheduling. Scheduling will be adjusted ASAP and no later than March 23, 2020 by Court Order. The Court will arrange for video proceedings as permitted.
- **Divorce Master and Custody Hearing Officer proceedings:**
 - Any Custody Conference, Pre-Hearing Conference or Mediation, that can be handled telephonically, shall remain as scheduled.
 - Any Custody Hearing or Divorce Master's Hearing shall be rescheduled to a date in a near future by Court Order.
- **Please check the Court Calendar located at <http://cc.pikepa.org/asp/calendar.asp> frequently for updates**

- **Magisterial District Court Offices:**

- Are directed to implement similar strategies to minimize exposure to themselves, and the public.
- The Magisterial District Judges are directed to implement a staggered scheduling of all preliminary hearings until further notice.
- The Magisterial District Courts shall utilize the video conferencing capabilities with the Pike County Correctional Facilities to the greatest extent possible in conducting matters before their Court.
- Please contact the Magisterial District Court before your scheduled visit or proceeding to obtain an update of the status of the office.

By way of update, the following safety measures have been implemented throughout the Courthouse and MDJ Offices:

County maintenance/housekeeping is cleaning and sanitizing the Court facilities nightly and will be disinfecting doorknobs, hand railings, elevator buttons, faucets, and other frequently accessed surfaces throughout the day.

Hand sanitizer is available at the entrances of both the Administration Building and Court House

We remind all staff and members of the public that the following is the recommended guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

- Cover coughs or sneezes with your elbow. Do not use your hands!
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Clean surfaces frequently, including countertops, light switches, cell phones, remotes, and other frequently touched items.
- Contain: if you are sick, stay home until you are feeling better.

The Court continues to work with the County to ensure the safety of the staff and the public that the Court serves. Thank you for your anticipated patience and cooperation as we navigate this changing situation.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Samantha Venditti".

Samantha Venditti, Esq.
District Court Administrator