

## **Revised Emergency Order and Notice from the Maine Supreme Judicial Court Courthouse Safety and Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

**March 18, 2020**

In light of public health concerns arising from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), Maine's Judicial Branch is taking steps to adhere to the guidance provided by the Maine and United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Persons identified as being infected by COVID-19, having had contact with those infected by COVID-19, or having visited areas identified as problematic due to the prevalence of COVID-19 should not come to Maine's courthouses.

The Judicial Branch is monitoring and managing the number of people in each courthouse in order to reduce the likelihood of the spread of COVID-19. That will affect the scheduling and hearing of cases and the number of jurors called into courthouses.

The courthouses of Maine remain open to the public, but you should only go to a courthouse if you are required to be there, or if you are seeking protection from abuse or harassment. If you have questions about whether you should go to a courthouse, please call 207-753-2999.

### **CANCELLATIONS AND POSTPONEMENTS**

**Effective immediately**, and continuing through May 1, 2020, unless otherwise ordered by the court, the following case types and proceedings will **NOT** be scheduled or heard:

- FED (Eviction, landlord/tenant)
- Disclosures
- Foreclosures
- Small Claims
- Medical Malpractice proceedings including Panel Hearings
- Family matters, except for video mediations which may occur if all parties agree. You will be notified by the clerk if a video mediation is scheduled.
- Adoptions
- Juvenile matters (unless the juvenile is being detained)
- Criminal matters (unless a defendant is in-custody)

- Civil jury trials
- All other nonjury civil matters including civil violations
- All actions to recover personal property
- All Violations Bureau hearings (traffic tickets)
- Grand Jury proceedings

All previously scheduled cases are postponed.

The courts **WILL** schedule and hear only the following:

- Arraignments and first appearances of defendants held in custody
- Motions for review of bail of defendants held in custody
- Juvenile detention hearings
- Protection from Abuse requests and hearings
- Protection from Harassment requests and hearings
- Child Protection petitions and hearings
- Mental health requests and hearings
- Emergency guardianships
- Hearings granted on motion

If a party or the party's attorney contends that there are urgent and compelling reasons that the court should hold the party's criminal, civil, or family trial or hearing, the party or counsel shall immediately file a written motion, which must be served on the other party or parties, explaining why this particular case must be heard before May 1. If any party objects to the motion, it must file its written opposition within three days after the motion is filed. The court will rule on the motion expeditiously.

## **JURORS AND JURY TRIALS**

- **JURORS:** Please do not appear at the courthouse for jury duty. All report dates between Monday, March 16, 2020, and Friday, May 1, 2020, are cancelled. Please check the Maine Judicial Branch website for any updates. **If you have been chosen to serve on a jury, please call the courthouse before you appear.**
- **LITIGANTS:** If your jury trial is now scheduled between March 16 and May 1, 2020, your trial will be rescheduled and you will receive notice of the new trial date.

Extension of the present cancellation period will be reviewed on an ongoing basis with notice provided to all parties.

### **BOARDS, COMMITTEES, AND CLE**

Effective immediately and until further order, all boards and committees established by the Maine Supreme Judicial Court are hereby authorized to conduct any and all meetings, conferences, and other activities by means of an electronic medium without in-person participation.

In addition, effective immediately and until further order, any in-person participation requirements for continuing legal education, including but not limited to the requirement in M. Bar. R. 5(c)(3), are hereby suspended and participation may be by an electronic medium.

### **ORAL ARGUMENTS IN THE SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT**

All oral arguments scheduled for April 2020 before the Supreme Judicial Court, sitting as the Law Court, are hereby cancelled. All appeals scheduled to be argued in April 2020 will be decided on the briefs.

If all parties to an appeal agree and assert that oral argument is necessary with respect to one of the cases previously scheduled for April oral arguments, the parties may jointly file a motion no later than **March 20, 2020**, requesting argument and concisely stating why argument is required. If the motion is granted, argument will be rescheduled in September 2020 or thereafter.

The Court will be monitoring events and providing updates with respect to the status of its calendar as to oral argument in May 2020 and thereafter.