

Muskegon County 14th Circuit Court Family Division

MEMORANDUM

4/8/2020

To: Family Court Staff, Judicial Staff, Prosecutors, Public Defenders, MCBA

From: Court Administration & Family Division Judges

RE: Status of Family Division Court Hearings, Effective 4/13/2020

Effective the week of April 13th, assuming the Governor will extend the “Stay at Home” Executive Order requiring the Courts to remain closed, we are prepared to have all Circuit & Family Court staff working remotely and all Judges and Referees conducting the majority of hearings remotely via Zoom virtual courtrooms. Please see below for the list of Family Division hearings and appointments that will be conducted during this time. Staff will be sending out Zoom notices for each hearing and appointment that provides detailed instructions for how attorneys and parties participate. Please find attached a sample Zoom notice. Attorneys/parties also have the option to call in, if they do not have access to a computer. The virtual hearing is a court proceeding, and therefore, an extension of the courtroom, so appropriate conduct and attire is expected and required. During virtual hearings or appointments, please remember to speak one at a time and to pause prior to speaking in case there is any audio/video lag. Please mute yourself when not speaking in order to avoid any potential background noise.

It is the responsibility of attorneys to communicate with their clients prior to the hearings. If this is not possible, the Zoom virtual courtrooms do have private breakout rooms that you can be put in to talk with your client. You will be given a timeframe for how long you have to talk with your client. Please try to be finished by the time you reenter the Zoom hearing or appointment. Attorneys are encouraged to provide the courts with your email address on any correspondence you submit, and to accept service via email, rather than mail, during this crisis.

Please email exhibits in advance of hearings to the email addresses below:

1. Judge Pittman- TownsendJa@muskegoncounty.net
2. Judge Hoogstra- PlaceRe@muskegoncounty.net
3. Judge Sprader- West41@muskegoncounty.net

4. Referee Spoelman- SpoelmanHo@muskegoncounty.net
5. Referee Hylland- HyllandJe@muskegoncounty.net
6. Referee McNeill- McNeillJe@muskegoncounty.net
7. Referee Monette- MonetteCr@muskegoncounty.net

Dockets will continue to be displayed on the court’s website and copies of hearings can be made by a paper or email request to the assigned Judge’s Judicial Secretary.

The Muskegon County 14th Circuit & Family Court Judges and Court Administrators are proud of how our staff and legal community have responded to this crisis. We appreciate your acknowledgment of the importance of working together to keep the virtual doors of our courts open to the public.

*Case-by-Case Basis- More complicated court proceedings will be subject to the assigned Judge’s capacity to conduct such proceeding remotely. That capacity is to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Neglect & Abuse

Type of Proceeding	Status
Removals/Preliminary Hearings	Continue Remote Zoom Hearings
Pleas & Stip Agreements	-Remote Zoom Hearings; Submit Stips; - -If not scheduled, Prosecutor to contact on-call Referee or Judge to take Plea
Pre-Trials	-Prosecutor to Email Completed Pre-Trial Form to Juvenile Clerk & Referee; -Remote Zoom Hearing, Only if Plea
Trials	Case-by-Case Basis*
Sentences	Remote Zoom Hearings
Dispositional Hearings	Remote Zoom Hearings
Review Hearings & PPH	Remote Zoom Hearings
Post Termination Reviews	Remote Zoom Hearings

Juvenile Delinquency

Type of Proceeding	Status
Detainment/Arraignments/Preliminary Hearings	Continue Remote Zoom Hearings
Pleas	Remote Zoom Hearings
Pre-Trials	-Prosecutor to Email Completed Pre-Trial Form to Juvenile Clerk & Referee; -Remote Zoom Hearing, Only if Plea
Trials	Case-by-Case Basis*
DL & DJ Sentences	Remote Zoom Hearings
Dispositional Hearings	Remote Zoom Hearings
Review Hearings	Remote Zoom Hearings
Probation Violation Hearings	Remote Zoom Hearings

Domestic

Type of Proceeding	Status
Pro Confesso Hearings	-Remote Zoom Hearings, If Attorney of Record; -Status for Self-Represented Litigants still pending
Child Support Motions	Remote Zoom Hearings (Referees)
Parenting Time Motions	Case-by-Case Basis (Mainly by Referees) -Some Decisions to be Issued based on the Pleadings, Can File Objections; -Some Remote Zoom Hearings
Custody Motions/MCR 3.210(C)(8) Hearings	Case-by-Case Basis (Mainly by Referees) -Some Decisions to be Issued based on the Pleadings, Can File Objections; -Some Remote Zoom Hearings
Trials & Objection Hearings	Case-by-Case Basis*

ADR- Joint Meetings & FIG As & Bs (Formerly Parenting Time Meetings/Conferences, Conciliation Conferences & Custody Resolution Conferences)	Remote Zoom Meetings
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Personal Protection Orders (PPOs)

Type of Proceeding	Status
Hearings on Denials	Case-by-Case Basis*
Objection Hearings	Remote Zoom Hearings
Violation Hearings	-Remote Zoom Hearings, if violator lodged; -If not lodged or show cause, hearings will be held on a case-by-case basis*

Adoptions

Type of Proceeding	Status
Petitions	Being Accepted via Mail- 3 rd Floor HOJ, Attn: Adoption Coordinator
Finalizations	-Judges Signing Finalization Orders; -No Hearings, but parties encouraged to participate in Adoption Day Event in November