

FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

President Judge Administrative Order

No 34 of 2020

In re: Family Court. Resumption of Operations. Updated Protocols.

ORDER

AND NOW, this 15th day of May, 2020 consistent with the terms of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's order of April 28, 2020 (Nos. 531 and 532 Judicial Administration Docket), it is **ORDERED AND DECREED THAT:**

1. Unless otherwise specified hereafter, this Order applies to the resumption of Court operations in Philadelphia Family Court, effective June 1, 2020.
2. While the Philadelphia Family Court BUILDING shall REMAIN GENERALLY CLOSED to the public, services and court proceedings shall be expanded as set forth hereafter. Family Court services, conferences, hearings, and court proceedings shall generally be conducted through the use of advanced communications technologies as defined in the General Statewide Judicial Emergency Orders issued by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court on April 28, 2020 (Nos. 531 and 532 Judicial Administration Docket). Family Court reserves the right to require parties and/or counsel and necessary witnesses to participate in person at proceedings held in the Philadelphia Family Courthouse, if necessary.
3. Supervised physical custody at the Family Court Nursery shall remain suspended pending further order of court.
4. **Suspension of Time Requirements.** The suspension of time requirements, time limitations, or filing deadlines imposed by this Court's Orders in connection with the Judicial Emergency will expire. Legal papers or pleadings required to be filed between March 16, 2020 and June 15, 2020, shall be deemed to have been filed timely if they are filed by the close of business on June 15, 2020.
5. **Rescheduling of Events** – As to Family Court, all matters that were given a date certain by notice issued prior to March 16, 2020 for any date from March 17, 2020 through December 31, 2020, are hereby administratively canceled and will be rescheduled. Parties will receive notification of their rescheduled hearing date(s). **This does not apply to cases designated as protracted, which remain as scheduled.**
6. **Filing.** All legal papers may be filed, as applicable, through the following electronic filing systems, which will be fully operational: Criminal Electronic Filing System, PACSES, and PACFile. Legal papers may also be mailed or emailed to the applicable

filing office as set forth hereafter. For the protection of court staff and court users, filing of legal papers in person at filing offices is suspended until further court order.

Domestic Relations

1. **Domestic Relations Customer Service**
 - a. Litigants seeking assistance with domestic relations matters may contact Family Court Domestic Relations Customer Service representatives at 215-686-7466 between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M., Monday through Friday (except holidays).
 - b. Domestic Relations Customer Service representatives are also available via email at Philacsc@pacses.com.
 - c. Litigants may obtain information about their support cases at www.childsupport.state.pa.us.

2. **Custody Emergencies** – the procedures set forth in [AGB Order 18 of 2020 In Re: Emergency Custody Petitions](#) are hereby incorporated by reference and shall remain in effect until further order of court.

3. **Protection From Abuse petitions** – EFFECTIVE **MAY 18, 2020**, the procedures set forth in [AGB Order 16 of 2020 In Re: Relief Under The Protection From Abuse Act](#) are hereby incorporated by reference and shall remain in effect, subject to the following modifications, until further order of court:
 - a. **Emergency Temporary Protection from Abuse Hearings and Orders.**

Emergency PFA relief will be available Monday through Thursday at the Stout Center for Criminal Justice beginning daily at 5:00 P.M. and until 8:00 A.M. the following day, and weekends from Friday at 5:00 P.M. to the following Monday at 8:00 A.M.
 - b. **Temporary PFA Hearings** – Temporary PFA hearings will be conducted through advanced communication technology from 9:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., Monday through Friday (except holidays). If a Temporary PFA Order is entered, the order will be available for pickup by petitioner (or counsel, if applicable) from 4:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M., Monday through Friday, in the Family Court lobby. In addition, petitioners (and counsel, if applicable) shall receive a copy of their Temporary Order via First Class mail.
 - i. Staff in the Domestic Violence Unit will be available telephonically from 8:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., Monday through Friday, to assist in the preparation of a Petition for Protection from Abuse.
 - ii. *In order to ensure there is adequate time to complete, execute, and file a verified petition and participate in a hearing via advanced communication technology on the same day, it is imperative that self-represented petitioners contact the DV Unit between 8:00 A.M. and 12:00 P.M. (noon) for all necessary steps to be completed.*

4. All Other Emergency Filings

- a. Emergency filings OTHER THAN CUSTODY EMERGENCY OR PROTECTION FROM ABUSE (see Paragraphs 2 and 3, above) may be emailed to the following email address: DRClerkEmergency@courts.phila.gov.

5. Non-Emergency Filings:

- a. **How to File.** In addition to the ability to electronically file Complaints for Support and Petitions to Modify Support through PACSES, non-emergency filings other than Interstate Child support matters may be filed via mail or email:
 - i. Self-represented parties may directly file complaints for support and petitions to modify support online at the following PACSES address: www.childsupport.state.pa.us.
 - ii. Mail – non-emergency filings may be made by mail to the Office of the Clerk of Family Court, 11th Floor, 1501 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102.
 - iii. Email – non-emergency filings may be emailed to the following email address: DRClerkRoutine@courts.phila.gov.
- b. **Filing fees.** Payment of all applicable filing fees, or in the alternative a fully completed Petition to Proceed In Forma Pauperis (“IFP”), must be received by the Office of the Clerk of Family Court simultaneously with a mailed filing, or within three (3) business days from an emailed filing. All filing fees must be in the form of a money order or attorney’s check (**no personal checks**), MADE PAYABLE TO THE OFFICE OF JUDICIAL RECORDS, and must be mailed (along with the legal filing, if applicable) to the Clerk’s office, addressed as follows:

Office of the Clerk of Family Court
1501 Arch Street, 11th Floor
Philadelphia PA 19102
ATTENTION: FILING FEES (if payment is included)

 - i. *IMPORTANT: If, after Court review, the IFP petition is denied, payment of all applicable filing fees must be made via mail within twenty (20) days from notification by the Clerk’s office to the Petitioner that the IFP petition has been denied.*
 - ii. IF THE FILING FEE IS BEING MAILED SEPARATE FROM THE LEGAL FILING, BE SURE TO INCLUDE THE DOCKET NUMBER IN THE MEMO PORTION OF THE MONEY ORDER.
- c. **Assistance Available to Self-Represented Litigants to File Custody and Support Complaints/Petitions**
 - i. CUSTODY AND LOCAL (NON-INTERSTATE) SUPPORT CASES: self-represented litigants seeking assistance to file complaints and petitions in child custody and/or non-interstate child support matters may contact the Family Court Intake Unit at 215-686-6311, extensions 19220 and 19221, between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M., Monday through Friday (except holidays).
 1. Intake Unit personnel will conduct an interview and obtain a valid phone number and mailing address for each petitioner.

2. Intake Unit personnel will mail the appropriate pleading to the filing party with instructions on how to complete and return the same, in addition to how to pay the applicable filing fee. At petitioner's request, a Petition to Proceed In Forma Pauperis will be mailed along with the underlying pleading. (Note that domestic relations forms can also be accessed at www.courts.phila.gov/forms under the "Court of Common Pleas Family Court – Domestic Relations" heading.)
 - ii. INTERSTATE SUPPORT CASES: Self-represented Philadelphia residents who require assistance with the preparation and filing of child support establishment/modification pleadings against parties who reside outside Philadelphia may contact the Intergovernmental Affairs Filing Unit to schedule an appointment by email at philainterstate@pases.com or by phone at (215) 686-4004, option number 2.
6. Forms and additional information (including a schedule of Family Court Filing Fees) are available on the First Judicial District website at <https://www.courts.phila.gov/forms/> and under the "Forms" section of the Domestic Relations page of the FJD website at <https://www.courts.phila.gov/common-pleas/family/dr/>.

Juvenile

1. Dependency Matters

- a. Shelter Care Hearings, Adjudicatory Hearings, Dispositional Hearings, Permanency Hearings, and Adoption Finalizations, shall continue to be conducted. Termination of Parental Rights shall resume. Parties will receive notification of their rescheduled hearing dates.
- b. With agreement of all parties, reunification orders will be administratively granted without a hearing, using advanced communication technology when necessary.
- c. The Court shall continue to issue orders for Authorization of Medical Treatment of a Minor, pursuant to 18 Pa.C.S. 3201.

2. Delinquency Matters

- a. Detention Hearings shall continue to be conducted Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at the Family Courthouse, 1501 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102.
- b. Adjudicatory hearings shall resume after June 1, 2020, with notice to parties and counsel.
- c. In cases where the juvenile is detained prior to the adjudicatory hearing, the Court shall schedule a prehearing conference at which time the pretrial detention of the juvenile will be reviewed using advanced communication technology.
- d. The Court shall continue to hear motions for step down from detention and discharge from placement using advanced communication technology.
- e. Dispositional Review Hearings shall continue to be conducted with notice to parties and counsel.

3. Filings

- a. **How to File.** Juvenile filings shall continue to be electronically filed through PACFile. Self-represented litigants may file according to the below procedures:
 - i. Mail – filings may be made by mail to the Office of the Clerk of Family Court – Juvenile, 11th Floor, 1501 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102.
 - ii. Email – all filings may be emailed to:
JUVclerkEmergency@courts.phila.gov.
- b. **Filing Fees.** Payment of all applicable filing fees, or in the alternative a fully completed Petition to Proceed In Forma Pauperis (“IFP”), must be received by the Office of the Clerk of Family Court simultaneously with a mailed filing, or within three (3) business days from an emailed filing. All filing fees must be in the form of a money order or attorney’s check (**no personal checks**), MADE PAYABLE TO THE OFFICE OF JUDICIAL RECORDS, and must be mailed (along with the filing, if applicable) to the Clerk’s office, addressed as follows:

Office of the Clerk of Family Court – Juvenile
1501 Arch Street, 11th Floor
Philadelphia PA 19102
ATTENTION: FILING FEES (if payment is included)

 - i. *IMPORTANT: If, after Court review, the IFP petition is denied, payment of all applicable filing fees must be made via mail within twenty (20) days from notification by the Clerk’s office to the Petitioner that the IFP petition has been denied.*
 - ii. IF THE FILING FEE IS BEING MAILED SEPARATE FROM THE LEGAL FILING, BE SURE TO INCLUDE THE DOCKET NUMBER IN THE MEMO PORTION OF THE MONEY ORDER.

BY THE COURT:

/s/ Idee C. Fox

**Idee C. Fox, President Judge
Chair, Administrative Governing Board
First Judicial District of Pennsylvania
President Judge, Court of Common Pleas,
Philadelphia County**