



Seventh Judicial Circuit of Maryland

COURT HOUSE

UPPER MARLBORO, MARYLAND 20772

SHEILA R. TILLERSON ADAMS

CHIEF JUDGE

SEVENTH CIRCUIT ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE

(301) 952-3766

TO: Bar Leaders and Public Law Offices

FROM: The Honorable Sheila R. Tillerson Adams
Chief and Administrative Judge of the Circuit Court for
Prince George's County and the Seventh Judicial Circuit of Maryland

DATE: March 20, 2020

SUBJECT: Circuit Court Reduced Operations

As you know, the Circuit Court for Prince George's County is operating with a skeletal staff, at a minimum until April 6, 2020, and if the fluid nature of this crisis is any indication, I would assume this reduction might go longer. I am reaching out to you because I realize that you may have emergency matters during this time period. As you know our court has a 24/7 drop box that the Clerk of the Court, with her reduced staff, is checking each day. "Emergencies" are brought to my attention and I, or my designee, will review them to determine if a remote hearing will be held. Please know that hearings will be the exception due to our reduced staffing and ability to address the volume, so only true emergencies will be granted hearings during this time period.

In addition to the emergencies that I referenced above, I want to make sure that you know that the following matters are being handled each day remotely:

1. Bond reviews
2. Arraignments
3. Juvenile Detention Hearings
4. CINA Hearings
5. Emergency Court Room to handle the matters referenced in the paragraph above.

If things get worse and our society is further quarantined, our court will also address Quarantine and Isolation hearings remotely. Therefore, it is important that you, the members of the Bar and our proud Profession, are prepared to participate in these remote hearings, if called upon during this period of reduced operations. Hearings will not be heard in the Courthouse, they will all be done remotely. Therefore, in preparation, I am asking each of you to download "Zoom Cloud Meetings" to your smart device, tablet, laptop or desktop. If you have an apple device you can go to the App Store on your phone; if you have an Android you go to the Play Store on your phone; or you can go to Zoom.com. Please set up your account and practice virtual meetings so you will be ready to participate in a remote hearing, if the need arises. Of course, it is my hope that we will not have to get to this point but we must be prepared if this happens.

This is how it will work in a remote hearing; the Judge will set up the hearing call. All of the Circuit Court Judges have been trained on Zoom and are ready to go if the need arises. On the call will be the Judge, a court reporter (who will be transcribing the proceeding and making the official record for the court) and a court room clerk (who will be responsible for the docket entries). Depending on the case type, it may be just counsel but in some instances your clients will have to appear. If your client's appearance is required it will be your responsibility to see that they are "Zoom proficient" before the hearing. If you have documents that the court needs to consider during the hearing, please practice the document sharing feature in Zoom and upload your documents to your device before the hearing starts. These remote hearings will be time limited and are only designed to handle emergencies and other mandated matters.

If anything changes, I will update you as we go through this together. Thank you for your patience! Please practice social distancing and take care of yourself and your families. This too shall pass and I look forward to seeing all of you back in the halls and courtrooms of this courthouse when we reopen.

All my Best!