

We are the Chief Judges of the Washtenaw County Trial Court (Circuit and Probate), and the 14A, 14B and 15th District Courts. We write on behalf of ourselves and for all of the 14 Trial Judges in Washtenaw County who serve you, the public. We have come to the very difficult and very necessary decision to suspend most Court activity in Washtenaw County until April 6, 2020.

Covid-19 is referred to as a “novel” virus. Our reaction to it as a community is, likewise novel. None of us has been through anything like this before. While there were short term suspensions and accommodations made after the tragedies of September 11, 2001, the Courts were able to resume operations very shortly thereafter. We are confronted with a different challenge today and our response is being taken thoughtfully and in cooperation with our funding units: The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, the Ann Arbor City Council and the Board of Trustees of Ypsilanti Township. We are also receiving guidance from the Michigan Supreme Court through its State Court Administrative Office.

We know that suspension of our Courts will work inconvenience and hardship on those who appear before us as litigants, witnesses, jurors, law enforcement, victims, attorneys and those charged with criminal offenses. But, it has become apparent that anything other than cessation of all but the most vital Court activities would add to the risk that the virus will spread in the community and overwhelm available medical resources. Every Court hearing that takes place requires face to face contact involving some or all of those listed above as well as with our dedicated staff. It is this contact that medical experts advise us must be minimized.

With this in mind, we will hold court hearings in only the most urgent matters, such as when a person’s liberty interests are at stake. Bond hearings and preliminary examinations for in-custody Defendants will continue to take place. Petitions for personal protection orders will still be processed, and violations will be addressed. Child abuse and neglect will still be addressed, as well as emergency hearings. We will use all technology at our disposal for video and audio conferencing to limit exposure. In all other cases, we will adjourn and reschedule matters to dates after April 6, 2020. If you have any questions, please first consult each court’s website for information:

Trial Court: [www.washtenaw.org/991](http://www.washtenaw.org/991)

14A District Court: [www.washtenaw.org/946](http://www.washtenaw.org/946)

14B District Court: <https://ytown.org/>

15<sup>th</sup> District Court: <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/15D/pages/default.aspx>

If your question is not answered on the website, then please call these numbers at the courts:

Trial Court: 734-222-3057

14A District Court: 734-484-9664

14B District Court: 734-483-5300

15<sup>th</sup> District Court: 734-794-6750

There is no guarantee that things will return to normal after April 6. We are all regularly briefed and will do our best to keep the public aware and informed of our plans. When we resume, there will, of course, be backlogs. We are already planning to deal with these issues. We have met, and will continue to consult, with our Sheriff, Prosecutor, Municipal Attorneys, the Bar and our staffs on how best to endure this crisis and resume services to you.

Joseph F. Burke, Chief Judge of 15<sup>th</sup> District Court

Charlie Pope, Chief Judge of 14B District Court

Carol Kuhnke, Chief Judge of Washtenaw County Trial Court and 14A District Court