

37th Judicial Circuit
Lee County, Alabama
Administrative Order 2020-1
Guidelines for Court Operations
Effective March 13, 2020 – April 16, 2020

On March 13, 2020, the Alabama Supreme Court entered an administrative order suspending all in-person court proceedings through April 16, 2020. A copy of that order is attached hereto and will govern in-person court proceedings.

Therefore, the following are suspended effective March 16, 2020:

- District Criminal dockets/hearings
- Small Claims dockets/hearings
- Traffic dockets/hearings
- District Civil dockets/hearings
- Jury Trials
- Circuit Criminal dockets/hearings
- Circuit Civil dockets/hearings
- Domestic Relations dockets/hearings
- Juvenile dockets/hearings
- Child Support dockets/hearings

Exceptions to the in-person appearance ban include:

- Initial appearance hearings (48/72 hour hearings) for adults and juveniles
- Bond related matters for adult offenders:
 - Motions for bond reduction
 - Motions for bond revocation
 - Motions to set bond
- Protection From Abuse hearings. Attendees at these hearings are limited to:
 - Complainant
 - Complainant's attorney
 - Defendant
 - Defense counsel
 - Witnesses
 - Others deemed necessary and preapproved by the judge

- Emergency child custody and protection matters (including Department of Human Resources). Attendees at these hearings are limited to:
 - Complainant
 - Complainant's attorney
 - Defendant
 - Defense counsel
 - Witnesses
 - Guardian Ad Litem
 - Others deemed necessary and preapproved by the judge

- Petitions for temporary injunctive relief in which the Court cannot handle via video or phone conferencing.

- Emergency protection matters involving elderly or vulnerable persons. Attendees at these hearings will be limited to:
 - Complainant
 - Complainant's attorney
 - Defendant
 - Defense counsel
 - Witnesses
 - Guardian Ad Litem
 - Others deemed necessary and preapproved by the judge

- Proceedings related to the COVID-19 public health emergencies.

- Emergency proceedings as needed by law enforcement and approved by the Presiding Circuit Judge.

- Other exceptions as requested by the Presiding Circuit Judge and approved by the State of Alabama Chief Justice.

In addition, the judges, clerk, and court security have met and decided as follows:

The Centers for Disease Control has advised people to take precaution considering the COVID-19 virus outbreak and has noted that the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Therefore, effective immediately, the following persons shall not enter the Lee County Justice Center:

- Persons who have traveled outside the United States within the past 14 days.
- Persons who reside or have had close contact with someone who has traveled outside the United States in the last 14 days.
- Persons who have been asked to self-quarantine by any doctor, hospital or health agency.
- Persons who have been diagnosed with, or have had contact with, anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

If you meet these criteria and have business with the Lee County Circuit or District Courts, you should proceed as follows to properly inform the court of your circumstance:

- If you are an attorney and you are scheduled to appear, e-file a motion and email the judge's judicial assistant.
- If you are represented by an attorney, contact your attorney.
- If you are not represented by an attorney, notify the office of the judge before whom you are scheduled to appear. You may use the notification form that is available at lee.alacourt.gov and the form may be faxed or emailed to the following:

- Judge Russell Bush
 - Fax: 334.737.3380
 - Email: connie.majors@alacourt.gov
- Judge Mike Fellows
 - Fax: 334.749.2949
 - Domestic Relations or Child Support Cases: Jennifer.margeson@alacourt.gov
 - Juvenile cases: dora.freemen@alacourt.gov
- Judge Christopher J. Hughes
 - Fax: 334.737.3417
 - Email: donna.moreman@alacourt.gov
- Judge Steven T. Speakman
 - Fax: 334.737.3388
 - Email: stephanie.jones@alacourt.gov
- Judge Jacob A. Walker
 - Fax: 334.737.3421
 - Email: Brenda.cowhick@alacourt.gov

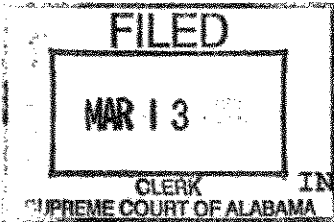
The Court Referral Office will be closed for in-person evaluations and monitoring appointments. These will be handled via video and voice conferencing where possible. CRO staff will contact clients about appointments and drug testing.

Personal contact with Circuit Clerk staff will be limited. Citizens will be able to drop off court payments in the form of money orders or cashier's check and/or file case-related documents at drop boxes located at the entrance of the Justice Center. Citizens with questions are directed to visit www.lee.alacourt.gov for information regarding court filings in all jurisdictions.

Done this the 14th day of March, 2020.



Hon. Christopher J. Hughes, Presiding Circuit Judge



IN THE SUPREME COURT OF ALABAMA
IN RE: COVID-19 PANDEMIC EMERGENCY RESPONSE

March 13, 2020

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER SUSPENDING ALL IN-PERSON COURT
PROCEEDINGS FOR THE NEXT THIRTY DAYS**

The President of the United States having declared a national emergency and the Governor of Alabama having declared a state of emergency for the State of Alabama amid the Coronavirus Disease 2019 ("COVID-19") pandemic, the Supreme Court of Alabama, pursuant to the authority vested in it under Article VI, §§ 139, 140, and 150, Ala. Const. 1901, hereby declares a state of emergency for the entire Judicial Branch of the State of Alabama.

The local and state courts of the State of Alabama are open and will remain open under all circumstances, subject to the provisions of this order.

Under the constitutional, statutory, and inherent authority of the Supreme Court, we adopt the following provisions. All in-person proceedings in all state and local courts in Alabama, including, but not limited to, proceedings in the circuit court, district court (including cases on the small claims docket), juvenile court, municipal court, probate court, and appellate courts, are suspended beginning Monday, March 16, 2020 through Thursday, April 16, 2020, subject to the exceptions below.

Exceptions to this suspension of in-person court proceedings include, but are not limited to:

- Proceedings necessary to protect constitutional rights of criminal defendants, including bond-related matters and plea agreements for incarcerated individuals.
- Civil and criminal jury trials that are in progress as of March 13, 2020.
- Proceedings related to protection from abuse.
- Proceedings related to emergency child custody and protection orders.
- Department of Human Resources emergency matters related to child protection.

- Proceedings related to petitions for temporary injunctive relief.
- Proceedings related to emergency mental health orders.
- Proceedings related to emergency protection of elderly or vulnerable persons.
- Proceedings directly related to the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- Any emergent proceeding as needed by law enforcement.
- Other exceptions as approved by the Chief Justice.

The presiding judge or the designee of the presiding judge of each judicial circuit is authorized to determine the manner in which in-person court proceedings for the exceptions listed above are to be conducted. Other exceptions to the suspension of in-person court proceedings must be approved by the Chief Justice. Any permitted in-court proceedings shall be limited to attorneys, parties, witnesses, security officers, and other necessary persons, as determined by the trial judge.

Judges are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that core constitutional functions and rights are protected. Additionally, court clerks are charged with ensuring that court functions continue. Nevertheless, all judges and court clerks are urged to limit in-person courtroom contact as much as possible by utilizing available technologies, including electronic filing, teleconferencing, and videoconferencing. Any Alabama state or local rule, criminal or civil, that impedes a judge's or court clerk's ability to utilize available technologies to limit in-person contact is suspended until April 16, 2020.

This order expressly does not prohibit court proceedings by telephone, video, teleconferencing, or other means that do not involve in-person contact. This order does not affect courts' consideration of matters that can be resolved without in-person proceedings.

Any deadlines that are set by or subject to regulation by this Court that are set to expire between March 16, 2020 and April 16, 2020, are hereby extended to April 20, 2020. This Court cannot extend any statutory period of repose or statute of limitations period.

Orders of protection and temporary injunctions that would otherwise expire between March 16, 2020, and April 16, 2020, are hereby extended until April 16, 2020, unless the trial court elects to enter an order to the contrary.

This order is subject to modification, revision, or rescission by the Supreme Court at any time during the time periods stated herein.

Parker, C.J., Bolin, Shaw, Wise, Bryan, Stewart, and Mitchell, JJ., concur.

Witness my hand and seal this the 13th day of March, 2020.


Julia Jordan Weller
Clerk, Supreme Court of Alabama