

FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER RE HENNEPIN COUNTY DISTRICT COURTHOUSE ACCESS

WHEREAS, On March 13, 2020, the Minnesota Governor Tim Walz declared a peacetime state of emergency in Executive Order 20-01 due to the worldwide spread of COVID-19, also referred to as the Coronavirus, and on May 13, 2020, he extended that order in Emergency Executive Order No. 20-53 and in a separate order, Executive Order No. 20-56, he rescinded the stay-at-home order announced in Executive Order No. 20-48, and Executive Order 20-56 also exempts the Judicial Branch from the limits on gatherings, and provides that proceedings held by the Judicial Branch are subject to policies established by the chief justice and will occur as directed by court order; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, the Minnesota Supreme Court issued Administrative Order ADM20-8001 concerning the continuing operations of the courts of the state of Minnesota under a statewide peacetime declaration of emergency initially providing that courthouses will remain open, discouraging *non-essential* visits to courthouses, promoting the use of social distancing and other mitigation factors for individuals within the courthouses, and requiring that no person who has an elevated risk of transmitting the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 attend any in-court hearing or proceeding; and

WHEREAS, on May 15, 2020, in light of the continuing state of emergency but in recognition of the Governor's new orders and the determination by the Judicial Council that the Judicial Branch is now in a transitional phase, and has approved strategies for a planned, methodical and gradual approach to extending the number and type of in-person hearings, the Minnesota Supreme Court issued updated Administrative Order ADM20-8001 ("MSCAO") which provides that: (i) access to all court facilities shall be limited to only court staff and judicial officers, and participants whose presence is required for scheduled court proceedings and the media; (ii) case participants may include parties, attorneys, and individuals who are required to be present for the proceeding at direction of the presiding judge; (iii) in-person access to judicial branch facilities at the public counters are limited to persons attending an in-person hearing and other services, including public access terminals, will be unavailable during this time; (iv) courthouse staff will continue to be available via telephone, and unless required to file electronically, filings may be made by e-mail as directed by court administration, by mail, in a drop box designated for court filings, as available, or by other means provided by court administration; and (v) filing fees will still apply; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 484.69, subd. 3, the chief judge of the judicial district has general administrative authority over the courts in the judicial district; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to protect the public, as well as Court participants and Court staff pursuant to the MSCAO, by ensuring only persons necessary for Court proceedings or have essential business with the Court enter courthouses, while ensuring that constitutional rights are preserved; and

WHEREAS, the Court is vested with the right and obligation to preserve order and decorum in its courtrooms. Minn. R. Crim. Pro. 26.03; Minn. R. Gen. Prac. 2.01(a) and 2.02(e).

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

1. All Court administration offices and public counters in the Fourth Judicial District are available to the public only for purposes of accessing services associated with in-person hearings pursuant to the MSCAO, and public counters will be opened in this district only as and when appropriate social distancing measures are in place. Designated Court administration staff may be in the administrative offices and courtrooms as may be necessary or appropriate for purposes of operations in the transitional phase.
2. Access to courtrooms and areas immediately outside the courtrooms, including Court administration lobby areas, at the Hennepin County Government Center; the Public Safety Facility, the Family Justice Center and the Juvenile Justice Center will be limited to the parties in the case who are participating in the hearing, attorneys who represent parties, any necessary court staff, alleged victims and their advocates, if any, probation officers, case workers for individual parties, psychological examiners (whether staff or contracted), immediate family members of an in-custody defendant, and other individuals, if the presiding judge determines they are necessary to conduct the hearing.
3. Representatives of the media are permitted to attend hearings held in courtrooms. Media shall notify the Court's Public Information Officer Spenser Bickett, at 612-801-7583 or email to: Spenser.Bickett@courts.state.mn.us in advance and be prepared to present proper media credentials at the courtroom.
4. The Court public website (www.mncourts.gov/hennepin) lists the applicable number or numbers to call if there are questions about a court case, filing documents, or access to the Court. For persons without access to the Internet, these phone numbers shall be posted in a prominent place in every courthouse that remains open and are also listed below.
5. Efforts will be made to accommodate remote appearances for scheduled hearings.

6. As established in a separate order, the Brookdale and Ridgedale Court locations will re-open on June 1, 2020.
7. The Conciliation Court located within Minneapolis City Hall, 350 South 5th Street, Room 306, Minneapolis, MN is temporarily closed.
8. All other Court locations will remain accessible to the public for the purpose of accessing the Courts to attend scheduled hearings.
9. The phone numbers to use for questions are as follows: Civil Division (including Conciliation Court): 612-348-3164; Criminal Division: 612-348-2040; Hearing Office: 612-348-6000; Family Court: 612-348-6734; Juvenile Court: 612-348-4822; Probate/Mental Health: 612-348-3164; Self-Help: 651-435-6535.
10. For persons who have business with the Court, eFiling and U.S. Mail are available. A drop-box for communications is located in the main floor lobby of the Family Justice Center, 110 South 4th Street, Minneapolis, MN. Effective March 25, 2020, a drop box is available on the skyway level of the Hennepin County Government Center, 300 South 6th Street, Minneapolis, MN by the Court monitors and courtesy phone near the entrance to the Courts Tower; and in front of the customer service window on the main floor of the Juvenile Justice Center, 590 Park Avenue, Minneapolis, MN.
11. This Order is supplemental to the Order entitled “Administrative Order Pertaining to Fourth Judicial District Court Courtrooms During COVID-19 Emergency” issued by the undersigned on May 18, 2020.
12. This Order supersedes the Order issued on March 23, 2020 and remains in full force and effect until further Court Order.
13. A copy of this Order shall be posted at each Courthouse or Court facility in the Fourth Judicial District.

BY THE COURT:

Dated: May 18, 2020

Ivy S. Bernhardson
Chief Judge
Fourth Judicial District