



MEMORANDUM

March 16, 2020

To: Court Personnel, Attorneys and Staff in Second Judicial District
Fr: Wayland J. Sermons, Jr., Senior Resident Superior Court Judge
Re: Second Judicial District Response to COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Chief Justice Cheri Beasley has entered an order implementing measures designed to curb the spread of COVID-19 and minimize the risk of exposure caused by crowded sessions of court. Consistent with the Chief Justice's order, effective Monday, March 16, Superior court and District court proceedings of the Second Judicial District will be rescheduled for at least 30 days, with limited exceptions.

The emergency directive of the Chief Justice does not apply to proceedings in which a jury has already been empaneled and it does not prohibit a judge or other judicial officer from exercising in chambers or *ex parte* jurisdiction conferred by law upon that judge or judicial officer, as provided by law. Additionally, the emergency directive ***does not extend filing and other deadlines***, however it is my understanding the Chief is weighing that possibility.

Court offices in all County Courthouses will remain open for business. However, unless you are required to appear in-person to conduct your business, attorneys and the public are strongly encouraged to use email and telephone to communicate with staff of the Second Judicial District. Contact information may be found on the [Judicial Directory](#).

[Online court services](#) are available for handling some court business, including citation services, paying your ticket, court payments, signing up for court date notifications and reminders, eFiling court documents for certain courts and case types, and more.

Accurate and timely information may be obtained from the North Carolina Judicial Branch system-wide response to the COVID-19 virus on the [NCCourts.gov website](https://www.nccourts.gov).

SPECIFIC DIRECTIONS

CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT OFFICES

- Maintain normal office hours to accept filings, until further notice
- Guardianship Hearings will be conducted as needed, subject to health precautions, including video testimony, as determined by the Clerk of Court.
- Involuntary Commitments will be conducted as needed, subject to health precautions, including video testimony, as determined by the Clerk of Court.
- Estate administration matters will be conducted, although in-person meetings will be subject to health precautions as determined by the Clerk of Court.
- Estate hearings will be postponed for thirty days unless consent by parties to conduct remotely.
- Special Proceeding hearings will be postponed for thirty days unless consent by parties to conduct remotely.

MAGISTRATE AND SMALL CLAIMS

- The Magistrate's Offices will function as usual and normal operations will continue for Warrants for Arrest, Magistrate's Orders, Criminal Summons, Initial Appearances, Cash Bonds / Property Bonds, Involuntary Commitment Orders, Juvenile Petitions, and Secured and Non-Secured Custody Orders. Weddings will be performed under conditions set by the Magistrate to insure safe conditions.
- All Small Claims court proceedings are suspended, and pending matters will be continued and rescheduled.

DISTRICT COURT:

See the separate Memo from Chief District Court Judge Regina Parker

SUPERIOR COURT:

- Maintain normal office hours, until further notice

Criminal Superior Court

BEAUFORT COUNTY March 23

MARTIN COUNTY March 30 (**No Grand Jury 3/30**)

WASHINGTON COUNTY April 4th

- No calendar calls. All non custody defendants continued. Non custody counsel not required to appear.
- No jury trials; no jurors summoned.
- The following will be conducted:
 - Taking of pleas for defendants in custody, where feasible, as scheduled by the District Attorney after consultation with defense counsel; and
 - Probation violations for persons in custody.
 - Other essential matters such as counsel issues, bond hearings or modifications

Civil Superior Court

All Civil Superior Court is cancelled for 30 days.

SHOULD YOU HAVE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT THE SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE'S OFFICE, AT 252-940-4076 or PAULA.M.WEATHINGTON@NCCOURTS.ORG.