



# NEWS RELEASE

The 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District of North Carolina

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **26<sup>TH</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT UPDATED RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

In protection of the health and safety of the community and court personnel, we are committed to balancing access to justice with the rapidly developing public health crisis that COVID-19 presents.

On Friday, March 13, 2020 Chief Justice Cheri Beasley 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 Tuesday, March 17, 2020, superior court and district court proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth Judicial District will be rescheduled for at least 30 days, with limited exceptions, which appear on the following pages.

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*.

***Court offices in the Mecklenburg County Courthouse 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 Twenty-Sixth 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.

If you need to update your address with the Clerk of Superior Court's Office please send us an email at [MeckCourtHotLine@nccourts.org](mailto:MeckCourtHotLine@nccourts.org)

Accurate and timely information may be obtained from the following resources:

- Information about the North Carolina Judicial Branch system-wide response to the COVID-19 virus is available on the [NCCourts.gov website](http://NCCourts.gov).
- Information specific to Mecklenburg County courts will be available [here](#).

**CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT:**

- Maintain normal office hours to accept filings, until further notice.
- Guardianship Hearings will be conducted as needed, subject to health precautions, including remote testimony, as determined by the Clerk of Court.

- Involuntary Commitments will be conducted as needed, subject to health precautions, including remote testimony, as determined by the Clerk of Court.
- Estates will continue to be administered, although in-person appointments are suspended at this time.
- Estate and Special Proceeding hearings will be continued and rescheduled. Notices of new dates will be issued and sent via U.S. Mail.

#### **MAGISTRATE AND SMALL CLAIMS**

- The Criminal Magistrate's Office located at 801 East Fourth Street will be open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week 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.
- **Courtroom 2310** will operate daily for the purpose of Involuntary Commitment Orders.
- Weddings will not be conducted at the Mecklenburg County Courthouse or at the Criminal Magistrate's Office.
- Small claim proceedings, including summary ejectments and money owed, will be continued and rescheduled. Notices of new dates will be issued and sent via U.S. Mail.

#### **DISTRICT COURT:**

- Maintain normal office hours, until further notice.
- District Court sessions have been suspended for 30 days; however, the following court sessions will run as a limited exception:

##### **Domestic Violence Court**

- **Courtroom 4110** will operate for the purpose of hearing *ex parte* Domestic Violence Protective Order (DVPO) requests and ten-day return hearings pursuant to G.S. 50B.
- **Courtroom 4130** will operate for the purpose of hearing *ex parte* Domestic Violence Protective Order (DVPO) requests and ten-day return hearings pursuant to G.S. 50B, as well as requests for emergency relief pursuant to G.S. 50C.
- **Courtroom 4310** will operate for the purpose of hearing domestic violence first appearance (no bond; in-custody), Domestic Violence first appearance, Child Support contempt (in-custody), and Misdemeanor Probation Violations (in-custody).
- DVPOs with no *Ex Parte* Order
- DVPOs with no *Ex Parte* Order, Motions to Show Cause, Motions to Modify or Set Aside, and Motions for Return of Weapons will be continued and rescheduled. Notices of new dates will be issued and sent via U.S. Mail.

##### **Civil District Court**

- **Courtroom 6330** will operate *on Tuesdays only* to hear:
  - Emergency and time sensitive *ex parte* matters including, but not limited to: Motions for TRO, Motions to Stay Eviction, and requests for temporary No Contact Orders pursuant to the Workplace Violence Prevention Act.
  - Ten-day return hearings pursuant to G.S. 50C
- District Court Arbitrations will be continued and rescheduled. Notices of new dates will be issued and sent via U.S. Mail.

##### **Domestic Court**

- Domestic court cases will be continued and rescheduled. Notices of new dates will be issued by the Family Court Administrator's Office.
- **Courtroom 4110** will hear all DVPO return hearings previously assigned to a Family Court Judge on the date for which it is currently scheduled. Motions to Show Cause and Motions to Modify or Set Aside will be continued and rescheduled.

- The return hearing for Emergency Custody motions in which an ex parte order has been entered will be heard in **Courtroom 8370** on *Tuesdays only*. All other emergency custody hearings will be scheduled on or after April 13, 2020.

#### **Criminal District Court**

- **Courtroom 1150** will operate for the purpose of hearing scheduled felony bond hearings and probable cause hearings for defendants in custody.
- **Courtroom 1150** will operate daily for morning sessions only to hear in-custody first appearances by remote video.
- **Courtroom 4310** will operate for the purpose of hearing domestic violence first appearance (C and D dockets), Child Support contempt (in-custody), and Misdemeanor Probation Violations (in-custody).
- All other criminal and traffic courts, not listed above, will be continued and rescheduled. Notice of new dates will be issued and sent via U.S. Mail.

#### **Juvenile Abuse, Neglect & Dependency Court**

- **Courtroom 8370** will operate on Wednesdays for the purpose of conducting non-secure custody review hearings (7-Day hearings).
- All other hearings will be continued and rescheduled. Notice of new dates will be issued and sent via U.S. Mail.

#### **Juvenile Delinquency Court**

- **Courtroom 8370** will operate on Mondays and Thursdays for the purpose of hearing detention hearings (secure custody reviews) and return indictment hearings.
- First appearances for non-detained juveniles will be calendared on or after April 13, 2020.

#### **Child Support Enforcement Court**

- **Courtroom 8110** will not operate. All child support cases will be continued and rescheduled. Notice of new dates will be issued and sent via U.S. Mail.
- Child support cases with the defendant in custody will be heard in **Courtroom 4310**.

#### **SUPERIOR COURT:**

- Maintain normal office hours, until further notice.
- Superior Court sessions have been suspended for 30 days; however, the following court sessions will run as a limited exception:

#### **Criminal Superior Court**

- No new jury trials (unless already empaneled in an ongoing matter as per instructions, subject to discretion of trial judge).
- **Courtroom 5310** will operate in the mornings on Fridays only for the purpose of felony bond hearings and taking pleas in expedited arraignment matters as scheduled by staff of the Trial Court Administrator's Office.
- **Courtroom 5350** will operate in the mornings for the purposes of probation probable cause and bond hearings.

#### **Civil Superior Court**

- No new jury trials unless already empaneled on an ongoing matter as per instructions, subject to discretion of trial judge.
- A Superior Court Judge will be available to hear emergency matters, if deemed necessary, as scheduled by staff of the Trial Court Administrator's Office.