

**ORDER OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE
OF THE SUPREME COURT OF NORTH CAROLINA**

Last month, I extended [Emergency Directives 2–8](#) and [Emergency Directive 18](#) in response to the public health threat posed by the COVID-19 outbreak. A further extension of Emergency Directives 2–6, 8, and 18 is now necessary. Emergency Directive 7 will not be further extended. A modification and extension of Emergency Directive 22 is also necessary to change the date by which local Jury Trial Resumption Plans may be promulgated.

These emergency directives are crucial to ensuring that our court system continues to administer justice while protecting the health and safety of court officials, court personnel, and the public.

Accordingly, I hereby determine and declare under N.C.G.S. § 7A-39(b)(2) that catastrophic conditions resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak have existed and continue to exist in all counties of this state.

Emergency Directive 2

The clerks of superior court shall post a notice at the entrance to every court facility in their county directing that any person who has likely been exposed to COVID-19 should not enter the courthouse. A person who has likely been exposed to COVID-19 and who has business before the courts shall contact the clerk of superior court’s office by telephone or other remote means, inform court personnel of the nature of his or her business before the court, and receive further instruction. For purposes of this order, a person who has likely been exposed to COVID-19 is defined as any person who:

- a. has travelled internationally within the preceding 14 days;
- b. is experiencing fever, cough, or shortness of breath;
- c. has been directed to quarantine, isolate, or self-monitor;
- d. has a known exposure to COVID-19;
- e. has been diagnosed with COVID-19; or
- f. resides with or has been in close contact with any person in the abovementioned categories.

Emergency Directive 3

Judicial officials throughout the state are hereby authorized to conduct proceedings that include remote audio and video transmissions, notwithstanding any other provision of law.

Judicial officials who conduct a proceeding that includes remote audio and video transmissions pursuant to this directive must safeguard the constitutional rights of those persons involved in the proceeding and preserve the integrity of the judicial process. To this end:

- a. While consent of the parties is not required to conduct a proceeding that includes remote audio and video transmissions, a party may, for good cause, object to the use of remote audio and video transmissions.
- b. If a criminal defendant's right to confront witnesses or to be present is implicated by the proceeding that is to be conducted, then the defendant must waive any right to in-person confrontation or presence before remote audio and video transmissions may be used.
- c. If the proceeding is required by law to be conducted in a way that maintains confidentiality, then confidentiality must be maintained notwithstanding the use of remote audio and video transmissions.
- d. If the proceeding is required by law to be recorded, then any remote audio and video transmissions that are used must be recorded.
- e. Each party to a proceeding that includes remote audio and video transmissions must be able to communicate fully and confidentially with his or her attorney if the party is represented by an attorney.

The authorization in this emergency directive does not extend to proceedings that involve a jury.

This emergency directive does not apply to proceedings in which the use of remote audio and video transmissions is already permitted by law. Those proceedings should continue as provided by law.

Emergency Directive 4

Attorneys and other persons who do not have business in a courthouse should not enter a courthouse, and those who do have business in a courthouse should not prolong their visit once their business has concluded. Attorneys are strongly encouraged to submit filings by mail rather than in person.

Emergency Directive 5

When it is required that any pleading, motion, petition, supporting affidavit, or other document of any kind to be filed in the General Court of Justice be verified, or that an oath be taken, it shall be sufficient if the subscriber affirms the truth of the matter to be verified by an affirmation or representation in substantially the following language:

"I (we) affirm, under the penalties for perjury, that the foregoing

representation(s) is (are) true.

(Signed) _____”

This emergency directive does not apply to wills to be probated, conveyances of real estate, or any document that is not to be filed in the General Court of Justice.

Emergency Directive 6

Notwithstanding the manner of service described in Rule 5 of the Rules of Civil Procedure, service required by Rule 5 may be made electronically on a party or a party’s attorney as follows:

If the party has consented in writing to service by electronic mail (“email”), then service may be made on the party by email to an address that is either included in the consent or is otherwise on record with the court in the case. The email must be timestamped before 5:00 P.M. Eastern Time on a regular business day to be considered served on that day. If the email is timestamped after 5:00 P.M., then service will be deemed to have been completed on the next business day.

If the attorney has consented in writing to service by email, then service may also be made on the attorney by email to an address that is either included in the consent or is otherwise on record with the court in the case. The email must be timestamped before 5:00 P.M. Eastern Time on a regular business day to be considered served on that day. If the email is timestamped after 5:00 P.M., then service will be deemed to have been completed on the next business day.

If one or more persons are served by email, then the certificate of service shall show the email address of each person so served.

Nothing in this emergency directive is intended to modify electronic service in the North Carolina Business Court, which continues to be governed by Business Court Rule 3.

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Emergency Directive 8

Marriages establish and implicate numerous rights and legal obligations (e.g., military deployments, social security benefits, pensions, workers’ compensation benefits, and disability benefits). The date of marriage may impact these rights and legal obligations. It is therefore essential that individuals continue to have access to the performance of marriage ceremonies during this time.

Accordingly, magistrates shall continue to perform marriage ceremonies. Marriage ceremonies before magistrates shall be held in a location that is approved

by the Chief District Court Judge and that is capable of allowing all persons in attendance to practice social distancing. Additionally, the Chief District Court Judge may restrict the hours and times during which marriage ceremonies are conducted, may require appointments for marriage ceremonies, and may restrict attendance at the marriage ceremonies.

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Emergency Directive 18

This emergency directive applies only in summary ejectment actions that are commenced pursuant to Article 3 of Chapter 42 of the General Statutes for nonpayment of rent or other fees or charges.

In actions commenced on or after 27 March 2020, no writ of possession for real property shall be issued unless the magistrate or judge concludes that either: (1) the property is not a “covered dwelling” as defined by Section 4024(a)(1) of the CARES Act; or (2) the property is a “covered dwelling” and the tenant had 30 days of notice to vacate as required by Section 4024(c) of the CARES Act. Further, no writ of possession for real property shall be issued unless the magistrate or judge concludes that either: (1) the property is not an “applicable property” as defined by Section 4023(f)(1) of the CARES Act; or (2) the property is an “applicable property” and the mortgage loan on that property is not currently in forbearance, and, if a prior forbearance period has expired, the tenant had 30 days of notice to vacate under the provisions of Section 4023(e) of the CARES Act.

The Administrative Office of the Courts has promulgated a [form affidavit](#) to be completed by the plaintiff in these actions. In actions that were commenced on or after 27 March 2020 and before 4 June 2020, the plaintiff shall file the affidavit with the court before the magistrate or judge enters final judgment. In actions that are commenced on or after 4 June 2020, the plaintiff shall file the affidavit with his or her complaint, and the affidavit shall be served on the defendant with the summons and complaint.

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Emergency Directive 22

Each senior resident superior court judge shall, in consultation with other local officials, craft a plan for the resumption of jury trials in his or her judicial district. In the event that the chief district court judge determines that a separate plan for the district court is warranted, the chief district court judge shall, in consultation with other local officials, craft a plan for the resumption of district court jury trials in his or her judicial district.

The Jury Trial Resumption Plan shall ensure that all court operations are in compliance with each of the Chief Justice's emergency directives and shall be informed by the Best Safety Practices distributed by the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts.

The plan shall, at a minimum, include the following:

- a. a confirmation that each court facility and any alternate facility to be used for court operations is in compliance with each of the Chief Justice's emergency orders in response to the COVID-19 outbreak;
- b. a plan for summoning and excusing jurors, which allows for as much of the process to be handled remotely as possible;
- c. a plan for conducting voir dire with social distancing;
- d. a plan for conducting trials with social distancing in the courtroom for all court participants, including the jury, and in the deliberation room;
- e. a plan for daily screening of jurors, court personnel, attorneys, witnesses, and parties for COVID-19 exposure or infection;
- f. a plan for making face coverings available to jurors, court personnel, attorneys, witnesses, and parties; and
- g. a plan for responding in the event that a juror, defendant, attorney, witness, judge, or other courtroom personnel becomes symptomatic, tests positive for COVID-19, or has a known exposure to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 during the trial.

The Jury Trial Resumption Plan shall bear the senior resident superior court judge's signature indicating approval of the plan by each of the following officials in the county in which jury trials are to be conducted:

- a. the chief district court judge;
- b. the clerk of superior court;
- c. the district attorney;
- d. the public defender, or a criminal defense attorney chosen by the senior resident superior court judge in districts without a public defender;
- e. the sheriff; and
- f. the public health director.

The Jury Trial Resumption Plan shall be submitted to the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Chief Justice no later than 30 September 2020.

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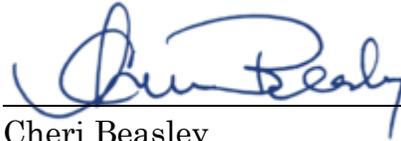
**Expiration of this Emergency Order and
Guidance to Judicial System Stakeholders**

Pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 7A-39(b)(2), the emergency directives contained in this order expire on 22 September 2020.

Additional emergency orders or directives under N.C.G.S. § 7A-39(b) may be entered as necessary to support the continuing operation of essential court functions.

Additional information about the Judicial Branch's response to the COVID-19 outbreak is available at <https://www.nccourts.gov/covid-19>.

Issued this the 24th day of August, 2020.



Cheri Beasley
Chief Justice
Supreme Court of North Carolina