

**IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF LANCASTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA  
SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT**

IN RE: CLOSING OF COURTS  
MARCH 18, 2020, AT 5:00 PM  
TO APRIL 15, 2020, AT 8:00 AM

No. AD 20-2020

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER**

AND NOW, this 18<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020, consistent with the March 16, 2020 Order of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court declaring a general, statewide judicial emergency, the March 17, 2020 Declaration of Judicial Emergency for the Second Judicial District, and the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regarding COVID-19, it is hereby ORDERED as follows:

1. Beginning Wednesday, March 18, 2020, at 5:00 p.m., the Court of Common Pleas of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District, Lancaster County, and all Magisterial District Courts will be **CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC** except for the emergency proceedings outlined below in Paragraph 3.
2. This closure shall remain in place until April 15, 2020, at 8:00 a.m.; however, re-evaluation shall be conducted as deemed necessary.
3. The following Court proceedings are deemed to be emergency in nature and will be handled either by telephone, videoconferencing or in person if there is no other alternative:
  - Preliminary Emergency Injunctions or Temporary Restraining Orders
  - Mental Health 302 Commitments
  - Bail Matters
  - Bench Warrants and Detainer Hearings (Pa.R.Crim.P. 150); provided, however, that Rule 150 Hearings will be conducted by videoconferencing
  - Emergency Protection From Abuse *Ex Parte* Proceedings
  - Domestic Relations Office Bench Warrant Hearings
  - Emergency Custody Petitions

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CLERK OF COURTS

- Emergency Juvenile Delinquency Hearings
- Emergency Dependency Hearings
- Emergency Guardianships
- Warrants
- Indirect Criminal Contempt Matters
- Preliminary Hearings where the defendant is incarcerated on the charge(s); provided, however, that the defendant shall participate in said hearing by videoconferencing
- Arraignments
- Petitions under the Disease, Control and Prevention Law of 1955

If a proceeding needs to be scheduled for one of the categories listed above, parties and/or attorneys are to call Court Administration at (717) 299-8041 to alert the Court and Court Administration.

4. All other proceedings are cancelled for this period and will be rescheduled.
5. All Court calendars, appearances, scheduling notices and subpoenas previously issued by the Court for the period of time covered by this Administrative Order are cancelled; future scheduling involving essential functions is not affected by this Order.
6. Walk-in bench warrants will not be handled.
7. The Sheriff's Sale scheduled for March 22, 2020 is postponed, and the issuance and enforcement of writs of possession are suspended.
8. The duration of an order granting a temporary *ex parte* Protection From Abuse petition and scheduling a final hearing pursuant to 23 Pa.C.S.A. § 6107(b) shall be extended such that the date of the hearing pursuant to 23 Pa.C.S.A. § 6107(a) shall be extended from 10 business days to the commencement of the hearing on the Temporary Order.
9. All final PFA hearings previously scheduled pursuant to 23 Pa.C.S.A. § 6107(a) for a date between March 19, 2020, and April 14, 2020, are continued until after April 14, 2020, and shall be rescheduled when the Courthouse re-opens to the public, and all temporary orders remain in effect until further Order of Court.



10. The duration of an order appointing an Emergency Guardian of the person or estate of an incapacitated person pursuant to 20 Pa.C.S.A. § 5513 shall be extended from 72 hours to a later scheduled hearing on the Permanent Guardianship.
11. As previously ordered, all Criminal Status Conferences scheduled through April 14, 2020, are continued to the next regularly scheduled Status Conference for the assigned Judges.
12. All Calls of the Criminal Trial List scheduled through April 14, 2020, are continued to the next regularly scheduled Call of the List for the assigned Judges.
13. Custody Conciliation Conferences will be rescheduled.
14. Child Support Conferences before Domestic Relations Officers will be rescheduled.
15. All proceedings not otherwise cancelled as set forth herein shall be conducted by telephone or videoconferencing when possible.
16. Use of advanced communication technology to conduct court proceedings is expanded and shall be used when possible.
17. All filings with the Clerk of Court, Prothonotary, and Register of Wills/Orphans Court shall be by mail (or electronically where available) except for emergency matters which will be done in person.
18. Lancaster County Courtroom 12 and/or Courtroom B will remain open during Court business hours as an "Essential Services Court," which will be presided over by the President Judge, or his designee, to address the emergency proceedings set forth in Paragraph 3.
19. For emergency hearings which must take place in person, the Judge handling such case shall apprise the Sheriff of the names of the individuals who will attend and shall apprise the persons in attendance of the requirement to bring identification for presentation to the Sheriff.
20. Time limitations for the initiation of any action or filing of any pleading or document applicable by statute, rule of court, or court order for all filings at the Lancaster County Prothonotary's Office, the Clerk of Courts Office, the Register of Wills/Orphans Court, and the Domestic Relations Office are extended until April 15, 2020; any filing required by statute, court order, or order of court prior to that date



shall be considered timely filed if filed on or before the close of business on April 15, 2020.

21. The operation of Rule of Criminal Procedure 600 is suspended. The constitutionally protected right of the criminal defendant shall continue to be upheld, but a delay for a COVID-19 related reason shall be attributed to the Lancaster County Judiciary during the time period of the judicial emergency and shall be excluded from the time computation under Pennsylvania Rule of Criminal Procedure 600.
22. The Lancaster County Sheriff and his deputies shall enforce a single entry point for all County employees and visitors through the Courthouse entry on Duke Street from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
23. Public access to the Lancaster County Court Facilities shall be limited exclusively to parties, witnesses, victims and/or attorneys in those cases that have not otherwise been continued.
24. Judges' Chambers shall ensure the attendance of Chambers' staff to accommodate the operation of the Court within these guidelines, particularly to ensure the attendance of a person who is able to facilitate the placing/receiving of conference calls or facilitate teleconferencing.
25. Court-related offices, including, but not limited to, the Prothonotary, Clerk of Courts, Clerk of the Orphans Court, and Register of Wills shall address their staffing needs to accomplish the essential functions of the Office and the Court.
26. Judges, Magisterial District Judges and Court Department heads are authorized to manage their offices as deemed necessary.
27. The President Judge may reduce attendance of criminal judges within the Courthouse to no less than one judge for any day to perform all anticipated criminal duties, including emergency duties.
28. The President Judge may reduce attendance of family judges within the Courthouse to no less than one judge for any day to perform all anticipated family court duties, including emergency duties.
29. Common Pleas and Magisterial District Judges are authorized to reduce hours of court operations to those necessary to perform their essential functions, hold hearings, accept filings, etc. Any reduction in hours at the Magisterial District Courts

shall be coordinated through Russell A. Glass, Deputy District Court Administrator, upon approval by the President Judge, and shall be posted by the Magisterial District Judges on the exterior entrance door to their court facilities.

30. The numbers of persons in court and at other meetings/conferences shall comply with social distancing recommendations, utilizing alternate electronic means where possible.
31. All Magisterial District Courts are directed to implement strategies to minimize exposure (continuances, staggered schedules, etc.) to be coordinated through Russell A. Glass, Deputy District Court Administrator.
32. On-Call/Night Duty Magisterial District Judges shall remain available to address warrants, arraignments and bail.
33. Payments of fines and costs for cases pending before a Magisterial District Judge will not be accepted at the Magisterial District Courts and shall only be made online at <https://ujportal.pacourts.us/PayOnline.aspx>.
34. The Magisterial District Judges shall post on their entry doors the dates of the closure, the telephone and fax numbers for the office, as well as the link to the site where the individuals can submit electronic payments.
35. The exclusive purpose of this Order is to promote and protect the health, safety and welfare of court personnel, court users and the public, and the policies will be modified as circumstances warrant.
36. Notice of this Administrative Order shall be posted on the doors of the Courthouse and on the doors of the Magisterial District Courts.
37. Notice of this Administrative Order shall be posted on the Court and/or County websites, and shall be transmitted via email to the Lancaster County Bar Association for publication on its website.
38. This Administrative Order shall be effective immediately.

BY THE COURT

DAVID L. ASHWORTH  
PRESIDENT JUDGE

Attest: Donna Flora, deputy



Copies to: Lancaster County Board of Judges  
Lancaster County Magisterial District Judges  
Lancaster County District Court Administrator  
Lancaster County Clerk of Courts  
Lancaster County Prothonotary  
Lancaster County Register of Wills  
Lancaster County Sheriff  
Lancaster County District Attorney  
Lancaster County Public Defender  
Lancaster County Adult Probation & Parole Services  
Lancaster County Prison  
Lancaster County Board of Commissioners  
Lancaster County Solicitor  
Pennsylvania State Police  
Police Departments within Lancaster County