

**IN THE JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURTS AND COUNTY COURTS
AT LAW OF HIDALGO COUNTY**

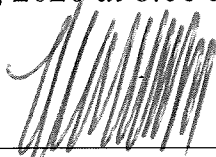
EMERGENCY ORDERS PERTAINING TO COVID-19

In accordance with Orders of the Supreme Court of Texas and The Court of Criminal Appeals of Texas issued on March 13, 2020, the Judicial District Courts and County Courts at Law hereby enter the following emergency orders related to court proceedings. This order applies to all case types and is meant to provide flexibility to delay or modify proceedings as necessary to address the disaster.

1. All jury panels are cancelled until May 8, 2020.
2. All jury trials are cancelled until May 8, 2020.
3. Effective immediately, administrative and other matters conducted in chambers shall be conducted in a manner to avoid risk to court staff, parties, attorneys, jurors, and the public.
4. If a court deems that non-essential (see below), in-person proceedings may pose an unnecessary or unreasonable risk to participants, court staff, or the public, the courts will avoid that risk, when possible, by simple delay or by a telephone or video remote appearance. Essential proceedings include, but are not limited to, criminal magistration proceedings, CPS removal hearings, temporary restraining orders/temporary injunctions, juvenile detention hearings, family violence protective orders, and certain mental health proceedings.
5. The Courts will publicly encourage persons with COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms, a fever, or who are coughing or sneezing, to contact the court before appearing. Courts encourage attorneys who know that clients, witnesses, or others have such a condition to alert the court in advance. The court will make reasonable accommodations and reschedule appearances and hearings as needed.
6. The Courts will continue to consult with our State and local health authorities on the latest CDC recommendations, and use the additional guidance to modify our practices if necessary.

7. ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS, AND DETERMINED WITH OR WITHOUT A PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT, THE COURT MAY:
- a. Modify or suspend any and all deadlines and procedures, whether prescribed by statute, rule, or order, for a stated period ending no later than 30 days after the Governor's state of disaster has been lifted;
 - b. Allow or require anyone involved in any hearing, deposition, or other proceeding of any kind, including but not limited to a party, attorney, witness, or court reporter, but not including a juror, to participate remotely, such as by teleconferencing, videoconferencing, or other means. The courts are aware that the open courts provision of the Constitution will generally require that the public have access to proceedings. If we hold telephonic or video remote hearings, we will have a method by which the public can have access.
 - d. Consider as evidence sworn statements made out of court or sworn testimony given remotely, out of court, such as by teleconferencing, videoconferencing, or other means;
 - e. Conduct proceedings away from the court's usual location, but in the county of venue, and only with reasonable notice and access to the participants and the public;
 - f. Require every participant in a proceeding to alert the court if the participant has, or knows of another participant who has, COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms, or a fever, cough, or sneezing;
 - g. Take any other reasonable action to avoid exposing court proceedings to the threat of COVID-19.
8. This Order may be extended or modified by written Order, without notice.
9. This Order is effective at 8:00 a.m., on March 17, 2020, and expires May 8, 2020, unless extended by the Court.

Signed and entered March 17, 2020 at 8:00 a.m.



JUDGE NOE GONZALEZ
LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE PRESIDING JUDGE
OF HIDALGO COUNTY, TEXAS