

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG  
IN THE GENERAL DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG  
IN THE JUVENILE AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS COURT FOR THE CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG

FIFTEENTH AMENDED ORDER TRANSITIONING TO IN-PERSON COURT PROCEEDINGS

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Orders of the Supreme Court of Virginia and the States of Emergency declared by the President of the United States and the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the judges of the Circuit, General District and the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts of the City of Fredericksburg located in the 15<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit do hereby order as follows:

1. All Courts will remain open.
2. Court Clerks are charged with ensuring that their offices remain open and functions continue.
3. All persons aged 5 or over entering the courthouse must wear a face covering that covers the nose and mouth. This includes Judges, attorneys, deputy sheriffs, court reporters, employees, members of the public, contractors, and all others who work in or visit the courthouse. Within a courtroom, the presiding judge may authorize removal of a face mask to facilitate a proceeding. Individuals without a face mask will not be permitted to enter the courthouse except for those who cannot safely wear a face mask because of a health-related condition. The requirement to wear a face mask shall not apply to judges or magistrates to the extent they determine it inhibits their ability to effectively communicate, or to individuals who have difficulty breathing or who cannot remove a face mask without help or have other medical issues that make the wearing of a face covering unsafe.
4. All courts, if they determine it safe to do so, may hear in-person proceedings through April 18, 2021, subject to prioritizing emergency matters, including, but not limited to:
  - Proceedings necessary to protect constitutional rights of criminal defendants, including arraignments, bond-related matters and plea agreements for incarcerated individuals;
  - Proceedings related to relief from abuse, including but not limited to orders of protection;
  - Proceedings related to emergency child custody orders;
  - Department of Children's Services emergency matters related to child protection;
  - Proceedings related to petitions for temporary injunctive relief;
  - Proceedings related to emergency mental health orders;
  - Proceedings related to emergency protection of elderly or vulnerable persons;
  - Proceedings directly related to the COVID-19 public health emergency;
  - Other exceptions as approved by a Judge of that Court;
  - Proceedings related to Drug Court;
5. The Judges of each Court are hereby authorized to determine the manner in which in-person court proceedings are to be conducted, provided they comply with the guidance provided by the Office of the Executive Secretary and the CDC in order to minimize the risk of spread of COVID-19.
6. Any permitted in court proceedings shall be limited to attorneys, parties, necessary witnesses, interpreters, the press, court personnel, court reporters, security officers, and other necessary persons, as determined by the trial judge.
7. Effective September 8, 2020, the issuance of writs of eviction pursuant to unlawful detainer actions may resume subject to the CDC "agency order" under 42 U.S.C. §264 and 42 C.F.R. §70.2.
8. All courts are authorized to accept pleadings, orders and other documents that are electronically signed, including those where the electronic signature is accomplished by scanning.
9. Through April 18, 2021, the Court may, in the exercise of its sound discretion, grant continuances for good cause shown or as otherwise provided by law.

10. Anyone who is ill or believes they have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus should remain home and contact the clerk's office by telephone or email.
11. The Court and security personnel shall direct any individual denied access/entry to the courthouse per this Order to contact the clerk's office by telephone or other remote means to inform the clerk of their business before the Court so they may receive further instruction regarding alternative arrangements for court access.
12. All courts and security personnel shall continue to take reasonable measures to prohibit individuals from entering the courthouse if they answer "Yes" to any of the following questions as currently recommended by the Virginia Department of Health:
  - a. Are you experiencing:
    - i. A new fever (100.4°F or higher) or a sense of having a fever.
    - ii. A new cough that you cannot attribute to another health condition.
    - iii. New shortness of breath or difficulty breathing that you cannot attribute to another health condition.
    - iv. New chills that you cannot attribute to another health condition.
    - v. A new sore throat that you cannot attribute to another health condition.
    - vi. New muscle aches (myalgia) that you cannot attribute to another health condition, or that may have been caused by a specific activity (such as physical exercise).
    - vii. A new loss of taste or smell.
  - b. Have you had a positive test for the virus that causes COVID-19 disease within the past 10 days?
  - c. In the past 14 days, have you had close contact (being within six feet for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, or having direct exposure to respiratory secretions) with someone with the suspected or confirmed COVID-19?


Judges are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that core constitutional functions and rights are protected. All judges and court clerks are encouraged to limit in-person courtroom contact as much as possible by utilizing available technologies, including alternative means of filing, teleconferencing, email, and video conferencing.

This Order does not limit any court's consideration of matters that can be resolved without in-person proceedings.

This Order is intended to be interpreted broadly for the protection of the public from the risks associated with COVID-19.

This Order may be shortened, modified, or extended as circumstances dictate.

FOR THE COURTS THIS 23 DAY OF MARCH 2021

  
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Judge Gordon F. Willis, Circuit Court