

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF ADAMS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
ADAMS COUNTY, PA
PROTHONOTARY

In Re: Judicial Emergency 2020 NOV 25 PM 12: 09 Supervisory Order
No. 2020-SO-40 E

ORDER OF COURT

AND NOW, this 25th day of November, 2020, pursuant to the authority granted by Pennsylvania Rule of Judicial Administration 1952, and in recognition that Adams County has experienced a significantly sharp increase in the number of COVID-19 infections including infections in County/Court Offices, it is hereby Ordered:

1. **Public Access to All Court Offices** for purposes of conducting court business is prohibited except as otherwise provided in this Order. For purposes of this Order and in addition to the Court and the Magisterial District Courts, Court Offices include: the Department of Probation Services, the Domestic Relations Office, the Department of Operational Services, the Clerk of Courts /Clerk of Orphans' Court Office, the Prothonotary's Office, the Register and Recorder of Deeds Office, and Court Administration. Any person, including employees, entering the Adams County Courthouse or the Adams County Human Services Building for purposes of conducting court business shall comply with the Adams County Policy Regarding Workplace COVID-19 Safety Measures which was adopted by the Court for court personnel by separate Order dated April 24, 2020. Pursuant to that policy, no visitor or employee may enter the Adams County Courthouse or the Adams County Human Services Building unless wearing a protective face covering in compliance with CDC guidelines. All face coverings shall cover the nose and the mouth and shall be worn at all times while on the properties with the exception of employees at a personal workstation as defined by the Pennsylvania Secretary of Health. It is further Ordered that the Adams County Security Department may request individuals entering the Adams County Courthouse or the Adams County Human Services Building for court business to submit to a body temperature check. In the event a person refuses to wear a protective face covering, submit to a

1 temperature check, or submits to a temperature check and displays an elevated
2 temperature, that person shall not be permitted access to the Courthouse or
3 Human Services Building. In the event the visitor is a party to an immediate
4 court proceeding, the visitor shall be directed to wait outside of the building and
5 the Security Department shall immediately contact chambers of the presiding
6 Judge for further direction. If the individual is present for purposes of filing a
7 document at a court office, the document shall be left at the Security checkpoint
8 and the filing office immediately notified by Security of the same. The protective
9 face covering restriction shall not apply to children under the age of two (2) or
10 individuals who cannot wear a mask due to a medical condition.

11 All staff and members of the public conducting court business in any court
12 office shall comply with all protocol/procedures adopted by the office as may be
13 necessary for the safety of staff and in compliance with CDC guidelines provided
14 the protocol/procedures do not preclude public access to court filings or interfere
15 with the timely processing of court documents and further provided that any such
16 protocol/procedures are approved by the President Judge. The procedures,
17 when adopted, shall be publicly posted in the respective office and on the
18 Adams County website. In adopting protocol/procedures, the respective office
19 should strive to restrict potential COVID-19 exposure which could result from
20 Court and County Agency staff interaction with the public with full consideration
21 to the necessary adjudication of constitutional functions utilizing advanced
22 communication technology whenever possible.

23 Elected officials/executive directors are directed to perform work
24 obligations offsite to the extent possible and maintain onsite staff at a minimum.

25 **2. Register and Recorder of Deeds Office** – All documents to be filed with
the Register and Recorder of Deeds Office shall be filed by regular U.S. mail or
in a deposit box located in the entryway of the Adams County Courthouse. The
Register and Recorder shall record and process all such documents on a daily
basis. All mailed or deposited documents must include appropriate filing fees.
Additionally, self-addressed, stamped envelopes shall be included in the filing for
filed documents requested to be returned to the filing entity. Documents will only

1 be physically received at the deposit box in the entryway of the Adams County
2 Courthouse between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., however, all
3 documents deposited by 4:00 p.m. shall be docketed and recorded by the
4 Register and Recorder that same date.

5 All counsel shall schedule the opening of estates with the Register and
6 Recorder of Deeds Office by appointment only. All *pro se* parties opening an
7 estate are encouraged to do so by making appointment, however, the Register
8 and Recorder shall not refuse to accept a *pro se* estate opening on the basis of
9 lack of appointment. The Register and Recorder is authorized to coordinate with
10 Courthouse Security to limit access of *pro se* estate filers provided the same
11 does not interfere with the timely filing and docketing of documents.

12 **3. Prothonotary's Office** – All non-emergency filings shall only be filed by
13 regular U.S. mail, electronic filing, or by deposit in a deposit box located in the
14 entryway of the Adams County Courthouse. The Prothonotary shall record and
15 process all documents on a daily basis. All mailed or deposited documents must
16 include appropriate filing fees. Additionally, self-addressed, stamped envelopes
17 shall be included in the filing for any filed documents requested to be returned to
18 the filing entity. All mailed or deposited documents must include, where
19 applicable, Sheriff's fees and a request service form which is available at
20 <http://www.adamscounty.us/Dept/Sheriff/Documents/RealEstate/RequestforServiceForm.pdf>. Documents will only be received at the deposit box in the entryway
21 of the Adams County Courthouse between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.,
22 however, all documents deposited by 4:00 p.m. shall be docketed and recorded
23 by the Prothonotary that same date.

24 The limitations set forth hereinabove shall not apply to emergency filings
25 which shall be governed by paragraph 5 below.

26 **4. Clerk of Courts Office** – All non-emergency filings shall be received by
27 regular U.S. mail, by deposit in a deposit box located in the entryway of the
28 Adams County Courthouse, or electronically pursuant to current practice. The
29 Clerk shall record and process all documents on a daily basis. All mailed or

1 deposited documents must include appropriate filing fees. Additionally, self-
2 addressed, stamped envelopes shall be included in the filing for any filed
3 documents requested to be returned to the filing entity. Documents will only be
4 received at the deposit box in the entryway to the Adams County Courthouse
5 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., however, all documents
6 deposited by 4:00 p.m. shall be docketed and recorded by the Clerk that same
7 date.

8 The limitations set forth hereinabove shall not apply to emergency filings
9 which shall be governed by paragraph 5 below.

10 **5. Emergency Filings** – Emergency filings will continue to be accepted by
11 the Court through electronic means currently in effect or through counter filing at
12 the respective filing office in the Courthouse. The Adams County Courthouse
13 will be open between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. for the limited
14 purpose of accepting emergency filings. Any party wishing to make an
15 emergency filing at the Courthouse shall file the respective pleading at an office
16 designated by the Adams County Security Department upon arrival at the
17 Courthouse. For purposes of this Order, emergency filings are limited to
18 petitions for protection from abuse, petitions under the Protection of Victims of
19 Sexual Violence or Intimidation Act, petitions for injunctive or special relief,
20 emergency custody complaints or emergency petitions to modify custody,
21 search warrant applications or applications under the Wiretapping and Electronic
22 Surveillance Control Act, emergency petitions in criminal matters, and any other
23 petition seeking emergency relief authorized by law or in the interests of justice.
24 The recording office shall immediately alert the Court as to the filing of any such
25 petition for the Court to determine what relief, if any, is appropriate. The
processing of emergency petitions shall occur in compliance with protocol
established by Court Administration.

6. Location of Court Proceedings – All proceedings for non-incarcerated
individuals held on Arraignment and Sentencing Court, DUI Court, Revocation
Court, and Criminal Plea Court for non-incarcerated defendants shall be held in

1 the Human Services Building Courtroom through and including March 31, 2021.
2 Criminal Business Court shall remain in Courtroom No's. 1 and 2 as originally
3 scheduled. Except as otherwise set forth in this Order, the location of all other
4 court proceedings shall be held at the location originally contemplated at the
5 time of adoption of the 2021 Court Calendar unless otherwise changed by Court
6 Order.

7 All proceedings for incarcerated individuals shall be held on the dates
8 scheduled but shall be conducted utilizing advanced communication technology
9 pursuant to procedures adopted by Court Administration.

10 **7. Central Court** – All Central Court proceedings for incarcerated
11 individuals will continue to be held utilizing advanced communication technology
12 pursuant to procedures adopted by Court Administration.

13 All Central Court proceedings for non-incarcerated individuals shall be
14 held on the dates and times adopted by the Court's 2021 Court Calendar. All
15 proceedings, however, shall be scheduled pursuant to procedures adopted by
16 the Adams County Court Administrator's Office who shall stagger individual
17 cases in specific time slots and comply with CDC guidelines. Central Court
18 procedures previously adopted by this Court are suspended to the extent they
19 are contrary to the scheduling procedures adopted by Court Administration.
20 Notice of specific time slot and date of any respective pleading shall be provided
21 by the Magisterial District Judge to all parties pursuant to the scheduled
22 proceedings.

23 All procedures related to the waiver of a preliminary hearing shall remain
24 as provided in paragraph 4 of Supervisory Order No. 2020-SO-40.

25 **8. Waiver of Formal Arraignment** – A defendant who is represented by
counsel of record may waive appearance at formal arraignment for the Court of
Common Pleas by presenting to the Court prior to or at the time of formal
arraignment a waiver in substantially the form attached to Supervisory Order No.
2020-SO-40 as Attachment D. The waiver shall be executed by both the
defendant and counsel. If a defendant represented by counsel waives

1 arraignment, the Commonwealth shall serve counsel of record with a copy of the
2 criminal information within ten (10) days of the date the waiver is presented to
3 the Court. The Commonwealth shall further provide counsel of record notice of
4 the dates of defendant's plea day appearance and jury selection/trial within ten
5 (10) days of the date the waiver is presented to the Court. Counsel waiving
6 formal arraignment on behalf of a defendant shall be prepared to indicate on the
7 record at the time of the plea day appearance and/or jury selection that the
8 defendant was provided written notice as to the respective date and requirement
9 that he/she must appear for plea and/or trial.

10 **9. Open Court Proceedings** – Only immediate parties, witnesses, and
11 Court/County staff shall be admitted to a courtroom for court proceedings unless
12 otherwise directed by the presiding Judge. Members of the public, including the
13 media, are permitted to observe court proceedings unless otherwise prohibited
14 by law. Any person wishing to observe a court proceeding must contact the
15 Adams County Court Administrator's Office one (1) business day prior to the
16 proceeding in order for arrangements to be made to effectuate that person's
17 attendance while complying with CDC guidelines and the Adams County Policy
18 Regarding Workplace COVID-19 Safety Measures. Court Administration may
19 be contacted by leaving a detailed message at 717-337-9846 requesting
20 attendance of a court proceeding. Failure to make prior arrangements to attend
21 such proceeding will result in entry to the proceeding being denied.

22 **10. Court Administration** is directed to adopt procedures utilizing advanced
23 communication technology to conduct court proceedings and provide public
24 access to the same subject to constitutional limitations. Advanced
25 communication technology includes, but is not limited to: systems providing for
two-way simultaneous communication of image and sound; closed-circuit
television; telephone and facsimile equipment; and electronic mail. Pa. R. Crim.
P. 112 and Adams County Rule of Judicial Administration 140 are suspended.
To the extent possible, and unless otherwise required by the interests of justice,

1 all court proceedings shall maximize appearance by counsel, parties, and
2 witnesses by advanced communication technology.

3 **11. Re-Entry Facility** – All community releases for employment, visitation,
4 community visits, treatment, or any other reason are suspended through March
5 31, 2021. Pending further Order of Court, the Adams County Work Release
6 Program is suspended. No person shall be sentenced to any sentence which
7 permits community release from the Adams County Adult Correctional Complex
8 or the Adams County Re-Entry Facility until further Order of Court. This
9 paragraph shall not prohibit release on parole or upon successful completion of
10 the incarcerated portion of a sentence nor shall it prohibit the Adams County
11 Warden from taking temporary action to preserve the health and welfare of an
12 inmate or the safety of the facility.

13 The Adams County Adult Correctional Complex is directed to adopt
14 procedures for family non-contact visits with residents of the Re-Entry Facility to
15 occur by telephone, video conferencing, or other media.

16 All fees charged to any person housed at the Adams County Re-Entry
17 Facility are suspended pending further Order of Court.

18 **12. Criminal Payment of Fees** – All court ordered payment of fees, fines,
19 costs, restitution, or other charges in a criminal matter shall be made by credit
20 card at www.govpaynow.com; <https://ujportal.pacourts.us>; or by telephone at
21 888-604-7888. Fees, fines, costs, and restitution may also be paid by depositing
22 the payment in a sealed envelope at the Adams County Clerk of Courts' drop-off
23 box located at the entry of the Adams County Courthouse. Payments shall be
24 accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope if a receipt for payment is
25 requested by the payor. Payments in the Clerk of Courts Office drop-off box
shall only be deposited between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Parties
shall not otherwise be permitted to enter the Courthouse for purposes of making
payment. In the event Courthouse Security becomes aware that payment
cannot be made pursuant to the procedures in the paragraph, Security shall
immediately alert the Clerk of Courts Office who is hereby authorized to make

1 arrangements to resolve the issue limiting, to the extent possible, the payor's
2 entry into the Courthouse.

3 **13. Domestic Relations** – The Domestic Relations Office shall be closed for
4 all counter filings except as otherwise provided herein. Filings shall be made
5 through the Pennsylvania Child Support website at
6 www.childsupport.state.pa.us, emailed to CS-AdamsMailbox@PACSES.com,
7 mailed, or faxed to 717-334-3440. If technology is not available to a client, they
8 may contact Domestic Relations at 717-337-9804 and speak with a case
9 management officer to request a filing by mail. If the request is for a UIFSA filing
10 to another state's jurisdiction, the filing cannot be filed online and the client must
11 contact Domestic Relations to speak with a case management officer to conduct
12 the filing over the phone. Self-help forms for local cases are also available
13 under the Domestic Relations Section on the Adams County website.
14 Payments of alimony/support shall be made online at the Domestic Relations
15 website <http://www.adamscounty.state.pa.us>, www.childsupport.state.pa.us, by
16 mailing a check or money order payable to PA SCDU, PO Box 69110,
17 Harrisburg, PA 17106-9110, or by calling PA SCDU at 717-727-7238. Cash
18 payments can be received at the Domestic Relations Office by appointment only
19 by calling 717-337-9804. In order to preserve a determined filing date,
20 complainants may file a complaint electronically at
21 www.childsupport.state.pa.us.

22 All Domestic Relations establishment and enforcement conferences will
23 be held telephonically or by video conferencing via WebEx and/or Microsoft
24 TEAMS. Domestic Relations will coordinate the WebEx and/or TEAMS meeting
25 if parties have the compatible technology to accommodate.

This paragraph does not preclude the Domestic Relations Office from
making appropriate arrangements for conducting paternity testing by
appointment only.

14. Court Scheduling – For Plea, DUI, Arraignment & Sentencing, Gagnon I,
Revocation, Criminal Business Days, and Criminal Trials, all proceedings shall

1 be scheduled pursuant to procedures adopted by the Adams County Court
2 Administrator's Office who shall stagger individual cases in specific time slots to
3 assist in complying with CDC guidelines. For Delinquency Court and
4 Dependency Court, the Department of Probation Services and Children and
5 Youth Services, respectively, shall stagger individual cases in time slots to assist
6 in complying with CDC guidelines.

7 **15. Location of Court Proceedings for Incarcerated Individuals** – All
8 proceedings for incarcerated individuals shall be held on the dates scheduled
9 but shall be conducted utilizing advanced communication technology pursuant to
10 procedures adopted by Court Administration. If presented with a complex
11 matter, a Court of Common Pleas Judge may order the Sheriff's Office to
12 present an incarcerated defendant directly to the Courtroom. If the defendant is
13 housed in a correctional facility outside of the Adams County Adult Correctional
14 Complex, the presiding Judge should direct that the defendant be produced so
15 that it is unnecessary to house the defendant in the Adams County Adult
16 Correctional Complex but should be produced and returned to the home facility
17 on the same day.

18 **16. Constables** – All Supervisory Orders governing the service of warrants
19 previously entered by this Court which have not been vacated shall remain in full
20 force and effect through March 31, 2021.

21 **17. November Criminal Trial Term** – The criminal jury trial term scheduled
22 to commence November 30, 2020 is hereby cancelled.

23 **18. Custody Conciliations** – All custody conciliations shall be conducted by
24 telephone or other advanced technology or shall be continued to a date beyond
25 March 31, 2021.

19. Sheriff's Sales – All Sheriff's sales scheduled for January 15, 2021 are
hereby cancelled.

1 **20. Title/Estate Searches** - Property title searches and estate searches at
2 the Register and Recorder of Deeds Office may be conducted online at
3 <https://landrecordspa.adamscounty.us/external>. All fees/costs related to online
4 searches are waived during the effective dates of this Order. Title searchers
5 who are employed by a law firm or title company shall be permitted access to
6 the Courthouse between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. for purposes of
7 accessing FullCourt on the computer terminal located in the lobby of the Adams
8 County Courthouse. Title searches on FullCourt by other members of the public
9 shall be limited to the hour of 2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Title searches on FullCourt
10 shall be conducted by appointment only by contacting the Prothonotary's Office.
11 Scheduling shall occur by procedure adopted by the Prothonotary.

12 This Order shall remain effective through March 31, 2021 unless
13 otherwise vacated or extended by subsequent Order of Court.

14 The Adams County Court Administrator's Office is directed to post a copy
15 of this Order on the Fifty-First Judicial District's website and on the Adams
16 County website. A copy of this Order shall be transmitted by Court
17 Administration to all members of the Adams County Bar Association.

18 BY THE COURT:

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20 **MICHAEL A. GEORGE**
21 **President Judge**

22 jvs
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