



603535

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IN THE PROBATE COURT OF FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO  
JEFFREY D. MACKEY, JUDGE

FILED #41  
MAR 15 2022  
Jeffrey D. Mackey, Judge  
Franklin County Probate Court

IN THE MATTER OF :  
COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY : CASE No. 603535  
AND COURT OPERATIONS :

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER ADDRESSING COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS, AUTHORIZING REMOTE PROCEEDINGS AND AUTHORIZING NON-ORIGINAL SIGNATURES

Public access to judicial services remains a paramount concern to this court. In attempt to protect court staff and the public from the ongoing pandemic, and in keeping with current guidelines from the Columbus Department of Public Health and the Ohio Supreme Court, this court issues the following administrative order. This administrative order rescinds and replaces all prior administrative orders issued under this case number, and shall remain in effect until further order of the court.

**A. Non-Original Signatures**

The provisions of Loc.R. 57.5 and Loc.R. 57.6 requiring original signatures are indefinitely suspended. The court shall accept filings which have been signed by electronic means, including but not limited to fax, email, scan, DocuSign or similar authentication services. Attorneys of record are charged with ensuring that non-original signatures obtained pursuant to this order are correct and issued by the appropriate person. Please note that only e-filed documents signed by the individual e-filing account holder may be signed “/s/signature.”

**B. Remote Appearances via Video Technology**

With the goal of permitting the court to maintain its functions while allowing court personnel and members of the public to maintain appropriate physical distancing, it is hereby **ORDERED** that a party’s remote video appearance to attend a hearing or complete a transaction is deemed a personal appearance, and satisfies a personal appearance requirement that is set forth in statute or court rule.

All hearings are currently being scheduled to occur via remote videoconferencing technology,

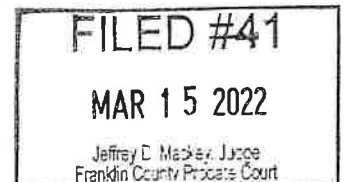
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using the Zoom application, unless otherwise specified by the court. Except in adoption cases, Zoom meeting information will be included with the entry setting hearing. Adoption cases will be issued Zoom meeting information closer to the hearing date. Parties should reach out to their attorneys with any questions.

Individuals who do not have access to videoconferencing technology may appear at the court to use one of the court's devices. Please appear before the hearing time, and where possible, please contact the court in advance at (614) 525-3896 to arrange for the use of the court's equipment.

Individuals may request that a hearing be held in person upon sufficient notice to the court and all parties involved, although the decision will rest with the hearing officer. Further, the court has obtained technology for hybrid hearings, allowing individuals to appear both in person and remotely.

Hearings conducted via remote videoconference technology are official court proceedings. All participants shall dress and conduct themselves as if in the courthouse for the duration of the hearing. The court may issue separate orders with generalized guidelines and decorum for remote hearings.



**C. Payments Over the Phone**

In limited circumstances, with prior approval of the Administrative Magistrate, Chief Magistrate, or Chief Deputy Clerk, court personnel may be authorized to accept credit card information over the phone from parties or attorneys licensed by the Ohio Supreme Court in order to process filing fees or complete a transaction requiring the remote video appearance. Please note that credit card payments over the phone are based upon outstanding or extraordinary circumstances only.

**D. Physical Access to Court Spaces**

Portions of the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> floors of 373 S. High Street shall remain open to the public. The public shall have access to the reception/information desk, the public drop-off/pick-up baskets, the

cashier, the marriage department, and the courtrooms when a hearing is scheduled (subject to confidentiality rules).

Due to a flood in January 2022, large portions of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Floor are inaccessible, including public restrooms and the court's waiting area, and many of the court's work stations have been moved. Public restrooms are located in the lobby of the building, as well as on floors 21 and 23. The cashier is temporarily located in the marriage department on the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor. The public may access files from the file room by making a request at the reception/information desk.

Due to ongoing security and health concerns, the general public shall not be permitted in restricted areas of the court, including individual employee workstations.

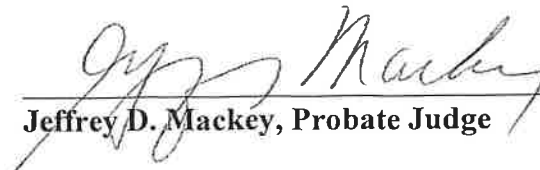
Filings may be dropped off at the court at the public drop box located at the 369 S. High Street entrance near security, or in drop-off baskets located on the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor of 373 S. High Street. Filings may be mailed to the court via USPS or other commercial carrier. All individuals requesting copies shall either include a self-addressed stamped envelope with their filings or indicate in a cover letter that they are requesting to pick up documents from the baskets located on the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor.

**E. Mask-Friendly Environment**

The Franklin County Probate Court shall be a mask-friendly environment. Employees and members of the public shall be permitted to wear a face covering while at the court. Masks may be required during in-person hearings upon the discretion of the judicial officer presiding over the case. The court reserves the right to change this policy upon guidance from the Columbus Department of Public Health or other a similarly situated public health agency.

**IT IS SO ORDERED.**

Date: 3-15-22

  
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Jeffrey D. Mackey, Probate Judge

