

POLICIES AND PROCEDURE FOR SANDUSKY COUNTY COURT

DISTRICT #2 WOODVILLE, OHIO

Pursuant to the guidelines set forth by The Supreme Court of Ohio Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor, and giving due regard to the same and the needs of our Court, I note the following for policies and procedure for Sandusky County Court District #2.

In accordance with Chief Justice O'Conner's request, "closing the court house and disrupting services is not a plan". Justice O'Conner has encouraged us to remain open with modifications put in place so as to protect our employees and the general public but continue to conduct the Court's business. After having consulted with the Prosecuting Attorney and the Clerk of Courts, I make the following orders with regard to procedure:

1. On court days, my Bailiff will be responsible to restrict access to obviously ill people. He will inquire specifically as to whether or not the person is required to be at the courthouse.
2. If inquiry is made, and in the discretion of the Bailiff, if my Bailiff does not believe the presence is essential, he may deny them access based upon this expanded security issue.
3. If said person is required to be in the courthouse, the Bailiff or the clerk in the Bailiff's absence will request that they wear a mask while they are in the courthouse.
4. Said person will also be required to sanitize their hands at the security area.

In order to implement and protect the general public, the employees and attorneys, the following will be implemented effective Wednesday March 18, 2020:

1. With regard to criminal pre-trials; all criminal pre-trials will be phone pre-trials only. This will continue for a period of 3-4 weeks at a minimum.
2. With regard to preliminary hearings, depending on the availability of an attorney all preliminary hearing will be conducted by video.

3. All other preliminary hearings shall be decided on a case by case basis if an attorney is not available or is unwilling to conduct a preliminary hearing at the jail.
4. All civil cases shall be continued for a period of 3-4 weeks. The clerk's office will send out a notice to the participants of this change in schedule as soon as is practicable.
5. The exception to this rule will be in Forceable Entry and Detainers. Forceable Entry and Detainer actions shall proceed as scheduled unless participants and/or counsel are ill. In that event the matter will be continued and continuances will be granted liberally.
6. Mandatory appearances who fail to appear will be scheduled out one week to discern whether or not the failure was due to illness of themselves or others. These will be determined on a case by case basis.
7. Monday mandatory appearances will continue as in the past. We will be screening carefully those who enter and utilizing the procedure as noted in paragraph one through four of this correspondence.
8. With regard to probation, the color system is hereby suspended effective Monday March 16, 2020. This suspension is indefinite.
9. All probation bond appointments will be conducted via telephone. The probation staff will be putting a greeting on the probation office telephones for those who call in. Text messaging will still be permitted for people to check in as required. Ms. Musa will handle all active case appointments and part-time probation officer Michele Mays will handle all bond cases with the assistance of Ms. Musa.
10. My probation officer Ms. Musa, will also check with Rigel to determine what policies they are putting in place for those who are or have been referred to the new Rigel treatment facility in Woodville. I will provide that information as soon as it becomes available.
11. Bond recommendations will still be provided by probation for video arraignments.

We are working closely with IT to ensure that the Judges' and the probation departments' laptops will be working so that they can be used remotely. At the present time I have no way of accessing court email. This has resulted in missing one crucial meeting already. Please use my Gmail at mbflaw@gmail.com until such time as I can confirm that I can access the court email remotely.

The security meeting which was scheduled for this week will be re-scheduled for Thursday April 9, 2020 at 12:00pm. An email to the appropriate people will be sent out this afternoon.

In sum, my goal in my court is to restrict access and carry out the policy directives of the Supreme Court of Ohio as set forth in Justice O'Conner's communication of March 13, 2020. I agree with Justice O'Connor that we should attempt to try in so far as it is practicable to continue court operations while at the same time protecting the county employees, attorneys who attend our court and defendants who are required to appear. As this situation is fluid I may implement additional changes as I feel they are necessary for my court.

As many of you know I have always granted continuances to attorneys who are ill and/or their clients. My unspoken policy has always been if you or your client is sick, **stay home.**

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached either at my private office 419-547-7770; my court number at 419-849-3961 or at 419-355-4723. I am hopeful that this situation will resolve itself if we all take the appropriate measures to protect ourselves by using common sense, that is using sanitary techniques and limiting extended contact with others in a public environment.

Best regards and God bless all.

Mary Elizabeth Fiser,
Judge Sandusky County District Court #2