

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 20, 2020

From: Judge Jeffrey T. Kirby, Presiding Judge
Judge Donald E. Oda II, Administrative Judge
Judge Joseph W. Kirby, Probate/Juvenile Judge
Robert W. Peeler, General Division Judge
Timothy N. Tepe, General Division Judge

The Warren County Common Pleas Court is open for business.

On Monday, March 16, 2020, the Judges of the Warren County Common Pleas Court signed a Temporary Order declaring the court facilities to be open, but with certain restrictions. Attorneys, litigants and visitors are subject to a health screening or non-invasive testing, such as having their temperature taken by a touch free thermometer. Hearings have been going forward all week, with modifications to promote public health and safety.

“Each judge is looking at the docket to see what hearings can be continued, what hearings can be conducted telephonically and what other accommodations can be made,” said Domestic Relations Judge Jeffrey T. Kirby. “Nonetheless, there is still a lot of what we do that has to get resolved in person.”

The Court has implemented social distancing, relocated non-essential personnel to work from home and has declared certain areas off-limits to non-judicial staff. The judges have also directed that filings be submitted by email wherever possible. Last year, in cooperation with Clerk of Courts James Spaeth, the Court adopted new rules for accepting documents for filing by electronic means.

“You may not be able to walk up to a counter and hand your paperwork to someone like you did last week,” said Administrative Judge Donald E. Oda II. “But, someone is going to be able to take care of you – whether it be on the phone, by email or just shouting at you from a safe distance.”

The Specialty Dockets, such as Drug Court and Veteran’s Court, continue to operate under modified procedures. Individuals with immediate needs, such as domestic violence or civil stalking protection orders, will get priority on the docket. The judges have also undertaken a review of all their cases with an eye on releasing non-violent, low-risk offenders to reduce the strain on resources in the county jail.

“We are not abandoning our vets, our victims or our defendants,” said Veterans’ Court Judge Timothy N. Tepe. “We can do this and still keep our staff and the public safe.”

Probate/Juvenile Judge Joseph W. Kirby is still issuing marriage licenses, proceeding with adoption hearings and other essential operations of Probate Court, and well as handling emergency motions in Juvenile Court involving abused and neglected children, complaints of risk and delinquent youth, and civil protection orders.

“In these troubled times, the people of Warren County need family more than ever,” Judge Kirby said. “We are going to continue our work to the extent we can help those families.”