

Fourth Judicial District COVID-19 Info Guide

Updated: March 25, 2020

After careful consideration and consultation, the Judicial Council has recommended further restrictions for in-person courthouse access. In response, Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea has issued a [statewide order, ADM20-8001](#) Continuing Operations of the Courts of the State of Minnesota Under a Statewide Peacetime Declaration of Emergency which went into effect on Monday, March 23, 2020. It is in effect for the next 30 days or until another order is issued, whichever comes first.

In addition, Fourth Judicial District Chief Judge Ivy Bernhardson has issued a districtwide order, [Order re Access to Judicial District Courthouses \(Stage 3\)](#). This order was effective on Monday, March 23, 2020, and is in effect for the next 30 days or until another order is issued, whichever comes first.

Together, these two orders make the following changes to business in Hennepin County District Court:

- The order restricts in-person access to courthouses for only designated case types, and allows additional opportunities for remote hearings that can occur during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Court will continue to accept filings in all case types. In Hennepin County, filings will be accepted via electronic filing, by U.S. Postal Service, and on paper at dropboxes located at:
 - The Family Justice Center, First Floor;
 - The Hennepin County Government Center, Skyway Level; and
 - The Juvenile Justice Center, First Floor.
- District courts may be contacted by [phone](#) or [email](#).
- Other than specifically provided for by the order, case deadlines established by Court rules remain in effect unless extended by an order of the Supreme Court or the presiding judge.
- No jury trials will start before April 22, 2020 at the earliest. No jury trials are currently ongoing in Hennepin County.
- Except for specific case types detailed in the order, all proceedings in other case types may only be held by ITV, telephone, or any other remote technology that permits the parties and attorneys to appear without being in the courtroom, or by review of the parties' submissions without oral argument, to the extent feasible and practicable as determined by the presiding judge.
- Hearings will be held in the courtroom for any case type where there is an immediate liberty concern, or when public or personal safety concerns are paramount. In-person hearings will adhere to Minnesota Department of Health social distancing guidance to limit the number of people and the proximity of people in a courtroom to the extent possible. Pursuant to an [order issued by Chief Judge Ivy Bernhardson](#), no more than 10 spectators will be allowed at any one time in the gallery portion of those courtrooms hearing criminal matters. This order is in effect through April 17, 2020, and may be extended by further court order.
- The Fourth Judicial District will make every effort to notify attorneys and self-represented litigants of the cancelation and rescheduling of hearings during the next 30 days. However, if you have a court case scheduled at a Hennepin County District Court location between March 25, 2020, and April 22, 2020, and you are unsure whether your case will be heard or will be scheduled to a future date, please call **(612) 348-6000**.

To implement the Order issued by Chief Justice Gildea, the Fourth Judicial District has developed case handling protocols by Division. Please note the information contained in this document is specific only to the Fourth Judicial District (Hennepin County).

Civil Division

Questions may be directed to: **(612) 348-6000**. Public counters located on the 3rd floor of the Hennepin County Government Center are closed. Attorneys and parties in pending civil cases should review changes outlined in a [memo from Presiding Judge Laurie Miller](#).

There will be **no in-person hearings** held in the Civil Division over the next 30 days, with the following exceptions:

Housing Court:

- If a hearing is required, it will be held in the courtroom on an emergency basis and only when there is a showing of individual or public health, or safety, at risk.
- Matters considered a high priority for review are:
 - Emergency Tenant Remedy Actions;
 - Lockout Petitions; and
 - Expedited Eviction Requests.

General Civil

- Requests for Ex Parte Harassment Restraining Orders will be reviewed and issued if appropriate (no hearing required).
- Harassment Restraining Order Hearings if public or safety concerns are paramount.
- Motions for Emergency Relief, such as motions for temporary restraining orders or motions for temporary injunctions if the assigned judge agrees an in-person hearing is necessary and that remote participation is not workable.
- Garnishment Exemption hearings

Conciliation Court

Questions may be directed to: **(612) 348-2713**. Conciliation Court located on the third floor at Minneapolis City Hall is closed. All Conciliation Court matters scheduled for the next 30 days will be canceled. New filings will be accepted but not yet scheduled. Filings may be submitted electronically, via U.S. Postal Service, or on paper at the dropbox located at the Hennepin County Government Center, Skyway Level.

Criminal:

General questions may be directed to: **(612) 348-2040**

If you think you may have an outstanding warrant, call the Warrant Hotline at **(612) 543-9768**

The Brookdale and Ridgedale Suburban Court locations are closed until further notice. The public counters located on the first floor of the Public Safety Facility and the 11th floor of the C-Tower of the Government Center are closed. Courtrooms in those two buildings remain open for the following case types only.

- The following adult criminal case types, where the defendant is in custody, will be held in the courtroom. The defendant and the attorneys may appear remotely. Victim impact information may be provided remotely.
 - bail review
 - hearings under Rule 8 of the Rules of Criminal Procedure
 - omnibus hearings that do not require live testimony
 - plea hearings
 - sentencing hearings and
 - probation revocation hearings, if any necessary testimony can be provided remotely.

Hearing Office

The Hearing Office is closed and will only hold video hearings. To schedule a video hearing, **call (612) 348-6000** and ask to be connected to the Hearing Office.

Violations Bureau

The Violations Bureau is closed. Citation (ticket) payments can still be made online with the statewide [Court Payment Center](#). There is a \$1.50 fee for using this service. Payments can also be made over the phone with a Visa or Mastercard by calling Metro **(651) 281-3219**, Outside the metro **1 (800) 657-3611**. There is a \$1.50 fee for using this service.

Treatment Courts (DWI/Veterans/Mental Health/Drug)

- All in-person review hearings are canceled.
- In-custody hearings will only be heard if it is determined an “on-the-record” hearing needs to take place.
- There will be one in-custody calendar each week for all four Treatment Courts, at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday morning.

Signing Judge

The Criminal and Civil signing judge is available from 9:00 a.m. to noon and 1:30 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. Monday through Friday, in courtroom C-593 in the Hennepin County Government Center.

There is a change to the daytime signing procedure with respect to search warrants that normally must be brought in-person to the daytime signing judge. For any warrant that would normally be required to be brought to the daytime signing judge, please email the search warrant to:

4thDistrictWarrant@courts.state.mn.us.

This procedure should not be used for any search warrant that can be sent to the judge through the BCA eCharging queue. This procedure should not be used to send search warrants to the overnight or weekend signing judge.

1. **Sign Your Warrant**-Search warrant affidavits must be signed by the submitting officer before judicial review. You can either sign the affidavit manually before scanning or you can sign the affidavit electronically. In order to electronically sign the affidavit add the following language:

[Your Name]

[Your Agency]

Electronically Signed

[Date and Time]

- 2. Email the Search Warrant and Affidavit-**Signed affidavits and search warrants can be emailed for judicial review to: 4thDistrictWarrant@courts.state.mn.us. You do not need to call the signing courtroom to notify anyone that your email has been submitted. Staff are monitoring the signing email group. Staff will verify that affidavits are signed and all documents are attached and will then immediately forward the email to the Signing Judge for review.

Include Contact Information-Make sure you include a phone number in either your affidavit or your email. The judge will contact you to swear you in and to ask any questions they may have regarding your warrant.

Family Division:

Questions may be directed to: **(612) 348-6734**. Public counters located at the Family Justice Center are closed. Filings may be submitted electronically, via U.S. Postal Service, or on paper at the dropbox for paper filings located on the first floor. Courtrooms located in that building remain open for the following case types:

High Priority Hearings That Will Occur Over the Next 30 Days as Scheduled

- Domestic Abuse Order for Protection, Ex Parte Order Request
- Domestic Abuse Order for Protection, Ex Parte Hearings
- Domestic Abuse Order for Protection Hearings
- Return of Child Order Enforcement
- Warrant for Custody of Child
- In-custody hearings related to a Family Court bench warrant
- Emergency Family Hearings/Emergency Family Motions
- Family Court Temporary Custody/Parenting Time Hearings
- Trials where there is an urgent custody or parenting time issue

Juvenile Delinquency

General questions may be directed to: **(612) 348-4822**. Public counters located at the Juvenile Justice Center are closed. A dropbox for paper filings is located on the first floor. Courtrooms located in that building remain open for the following case types:

- The following juvenile proceedings, and cases where the juvenile is in custody, will be held in the courtroom. The juvenile and the attorneys may appear remotely.
 - detention review
 - omnibus hearings that do not require live testimony
 - plea hearings
 - certification hearings
 - extended juvenile jurisdiction hearings
 - disposition hearings and
 - probation revocation hearings, if any necessary testimony can be provided remotely.

Child Protection (CHIPs):

- Juvenile protection proceedings for emergency protective care (EPC) will be held in the courtroom. When possible, EPC hearings will be combined with any admit/deny hearing.

Attendance at these hearings will be limited to parties and parent-participants, and their attorneys.

- All other proceedings in juvenile protection matters may only be held remotely, or will be conducted on paper based on the assigned judge's review of the written submissions.

Probate/Mental Health Division

Questions may be directed to: **(612) 348-6000**. Public counters located on the 4th floor of the Hennepin County Government Center are closed.

- Civil Commitment hearings are being held (remotely when possible).
Emergency guardianship/conservatorship matters are being held.

Other Court Services or Partner-provided Services

Records Center

The Fourth District Centralized Record Center is closed but is providing services remotely, via email or over the phone only. If you know what you need, you can pay for a copy through the electronic filing system using court file number 27-CV-20-000003, or you can mail a check along with your request. Requests are also accepted with payment via the dropbox located at the Hennepin County Government Center, Skyway Level. More information is available on the [public website](#). If you have an urgent need to run a criminal records check, you should contact the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA).

Self-Help Centers

The Government Center and Family Justice Center Self-Help Centers are closed but they are providing services remotely, via email or over the phone only. For the Government Center Self-Help Center, call **(612) 348-9399** and for the Family Justice Center, call **612-596-1067**. You can also contact the Statewide Self-Help Center at **(651) 435-6535**, or fill out their contact form for help [via email](#).

Legal Advice Clinics

All legal advice clinics run by the Volunteer Lawyers Network or Hennepin County Bar Association onsite at Hennepin County District Court locations have been canceled until further notice. These include:

- Legal Access Point Clinics at Self-Help Centers, Conciliation Court and Housing Court; and
- Misdemeanor Defense Project at Brookdale.

Domestic Abuse Service Center (DASC)

The DASC office located in the Hennepin County Government Center is closed. All services will be available remotely until further notice. These remote services, including advocacy, Orders for Protection, and safety planning, can be accessed by calling (612) 348-5073. While the public is being discouraged from coming to the Government Center, if someone finds themselves in the Government Center seeking help for domestic abuse, Conference Room A0710 has been set up with phones to call (612) 348-5073. In addition, [a video has been created with directions for reference](#).

Jurors:

Jurors must follow the instructions on paper summons, but the Minnesota Judicial Branch will not be calling any additional jurors to courthouses for the next 30 days. Individuals with suspected or actual exposure to COVID-19 who are summoned to report for jury duty must [contact the court](#) to discuss rescheduling options for his or her jury service.

- Grand juries that have been empaneled as of March 23 and are actively hearing a case will continue to hear the case unless they are notified that sessions have been cancelled.
- No new jury trials or grand jury proceedings will start before April 22, 2020.

Media:

To ensure access to hearings, members of the media who wish to cover a hearing must work with the [State Court Information Office or the Hennepin County District Court Communications Specialist](#). Media must provide 24-hours advance notice of a request to attend a hearing, and will be required to follow all social distancing protocols enforced by court administration and judicial officers. Where multiple requests exist, media may be required to coordinate a pool. There will be no access to public access terminals (courthouse terminals) or non-courtroom space in courthouses for the public or media.

Members of the media should email Kyle.Christopherson@courts.state.mn.us to request documents that they believe are available in Courthouse view during this time. Documents will be made available free of charge as a courtesy service. Media are asked to limit their requests to less than 5 per day in order for this service to be sustainable.