

In re: Court Operations During
COVID-19 Emergency

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In Probate Courts
No. 1 and No. 2
Tarrant County, Texas

Second Order

The Courts enter this second order regarding court operations in response to the COVID-19 emergency.

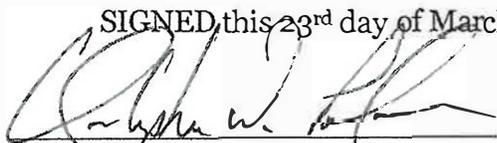
In an effort to comply with the orders of the Texas Supreme Court, as well as federal, state, and local officials, the Courts find that all in-person, non-essential proceedings should be cancelled until May 8, 2020. Essential proceedings include mental health commitment cases, temporary restraining orders, temporary guardianships, temporary administrations, and emergency protective orders. Requests for scheduling essential proceedings should be made in the same manner as before this order.

Some non-essential cases may be heard by the Courts through the use of video conference technology. The setting of these cases will be at the sole discretion of the respective Courts, and in a manner consistent with the instruction sheet attached as Exhibit A.

Nothing in this order should be interpreted as an extension of deadlines established by statute, rule, or order of this court. If certain cases require the extension of a specific deadline, attorneys are instructed to seek relief via motion to the respective Court. Further, this order does not relieve any party from the requirement to file a request for retention or transfer for the Probate Court No. 2 dismissal docket set for 4:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. on April 6, 2020. The Courts will continue to review items filed on submission.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that all non-essential proceedings currently scheduled to occur before May 9, 2020, in the Probate Courts of Tarrant County are cancelled. The scheduling of essential proceedings will occur on an as needed basis through the respective court. The future scheduling of non-essential proceedings to occur before May 9, 2020, will be at the discretion of the respective court and pursuant to the instruction sheet attached as Exhibit A.

SIGNED this 23rd day of March, 2020.



Judge Christopher W. Ponder
Probate Court No. 1



Judge Brooke Allen
Probate Court No. 2

Video Hearings During COVID-19

Muniment of Title and Independent Executor -- Self-Proved Wills Only

(We are working to expand the type of hearings, but at this time, these are the ones eligible).

Please follow this process:

1. File your application and make sure the original will is delivered to the court (as usual). If you cannot produce an original will, then the hearing is not eligible for this procedure at this time.
2. File a proposed proof, oath, and order.
3. Set your hearing by contacting court staff. For Court No. 1, email your request to probatecourt1@tarrantcounty.com. For Court No. 2, email Tina Clay, at TAClay@tarrantcounty.com. Each hearing is estimated to take at least 15 minutes so the number of hearings will be drastically reduced from our normal Monday docket.
4. In your letter confirming setting you must verify the following:
 - a. Date and time of hearing;
 - b. You and your witness have the capability of connecting with video and sound via Zoom.com and provide the email addresses to which the Court should share the meeting request to for the hearing;
 - c. Whether or not a notary will be available to swear in your witness (with the witness) or notarize the proof and oath (or that you will review the proof and oath for the witness to include an unsworn declaration); and
 - d. That you will be with the witness and notary during the hearing.
5. During the hearing you need to have a copy of the will with you and be prepared to prove the copy per the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure (the judges will attempt to show the original via video to the witness, but this may not work well).
6. At the end of the hearing, assuming approval, the witness will sign the proof and oath, notary will notarize (if available), and the judge will sign the order. The proof and oath will need to be filed electronically and then the clerks will be able to issue letters (the court will email you a copy of the signed order).

