

To: All Iowans
From: Iowa Judicial Branch
Re: Judicial Branch Operations Summary
Date: April 6, 2020

Today, the court issued a supervisory order on the impact of COVID-19 on youth and families in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. This order replaces the Guidance to Juvenile Judges issued on March 20, 2020.

On April 2nd, the court issued a supervisory order that combined the previous seven supervisory orders and extends the dates and dispensations for certain court operations.

Reference Materials:

[Supreme Court Supervisory Order, April 6, 2020](#)
[Supreme Court Supervisory Order, April 2, 2020](#)

Summary:

Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Youth: We are monitoring the impact of coronavirus/COVID-19 on the staff who supervise family interactions involving youth and families involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. We are balancing the safety of the youth with the guidelines issued by public health agencies. Today, the supreme court issued a supervisory order to alert the juvenile courts that COVID-19 has a profound impact on family interactions and that the juvenile court should allow room for exceptions to in person family time. This supervisory order temporarily authorizes virtual family time in lieu of in person family time. Implementation of this order will be monitored by the supreme court and on or before May 1, 2020 the court will decide whether to terminate, modify or extend the order.

Courthouse Access: Chief Judges are working with each county to ensure that the public is able to access Clerk of Court offices and courtrooms for emergency and essential matters. If you need to access the Clerk's Office, please call the clerk of court's office first so that you are provided with procedures that are in place. Phone numbers are listed in the [Clerk of Court phone directory](#) on the judicial branch website. Do not visit the Clerk of Court's Office or the courthouse in person if you are feeling ill or if you are subject to a quarantine.

Emergency and Essential Matters: This list is not exclusive and judges shall determine what constitutes an emergency but generally emergency and essential matters are:

- Criminal matters that cannot be continued or conducted by videoconference or telephone
- The protection of vulnerable people, such as the elderly, children and persons with disabilities
- Initial appearances, preliminary hearings, bail hearings and arraignments
- Hearings related to quarantine orders and other public-health related matters
- Protection orders for individual who fear for their safety
- Search warrants and other law enforcement actions

New Dates for Resumption of Non-Emergency Court Proceedings

- June 1, 2020: criminal non-jury
- June 15, 2020: civil, including family law non-jury
- July 13, 2020: criminal jury
- August 3, 2020: civil jury

Forcible Entry and Detainer: All the FED (eviction cases) set to commence before June 15, 2020 shall be continued unless the tenancy poses a clear and present danger or the district court decides to proceed by phone. On March 20, 2020, the Governor issued an order concerning suspension of certain evictions.

Please feel free to share any concerns or questions you may have with Anna Stoeffler (anna.stoeffler@iowacourts.gov), Chief Justice Christensen's Senior Law Clerk. Ms. Stoeffler is regularly reviewing these communications and assembling and forwarding information to the Chief Justice.

The Iowa Judicial Branch sincerely appreciates the professionalism and patience from attorneys, law enforcement, county attorneys, public defenders and all Iowans who access the courts in their communities.