

To: All Iowans
From: Iowa Judicial Branch
Re: Judicial Branch Operations Summary
Date: April 20, 2020

The court issued a supervisory order on Friday, April 17 to address certain issues that had been raised regarding criminal law practice under COVID-19 and to allow more lawyers to assist with the COVID-19 Iowa Legal Information Hotline.

Reference Materials:

[Information on the COVID-19 Iowa Legal Information Hotline](#)
[Supreme Court Supervisory Order, April 17, 2020](#)
[Supreme Court Supervisory Order, April 6, 2020](#)
[Supreme Court Supervisory Order, April 2, 2020](#)

Summary:

Lawyers helping Iowans: **The supreme court strongly encourages lawyers to volunteer with the COVID-19 Iowa Legal Information Hotline or provide other forms of pro bono options during these trying times.** The supreme court adopted temporary changes to the rules governing pro bono practice so that non-Iowa, inactive and emeritus lawyers are allow allowed to volunteer for the COVID-19 Iowa Legal Hotline. Attorneys licensed in other states and attorneys who have allowed their Iowa license to expire may participate in this needed service.

Criminal pre-trial motions: Deadlines for filing criminal pre-trial motions have been pushed back in light of previously ordered criminal trial postponements. Generally, where the defendant has been arraigned before June 1 and the trial is scheduled after June 1, the deadline for filing motions is 15 days from arraignment date or 30 days from the trial date, whichever is later.

Continuances in criminal matters: The supreme court clarified the April 2nd order. If the defendant does not waive personal appearance for a motion hearing or a sentencing, then the court has authority to continue the matter until after June 1.

Waivers by defense counsel on behalf of the defendant: Through August 3rd, the court may allow defense counsel to execute a written arraignment form or a waiver of personal appearance on behalf of the defendant.

Written guilty pleas may be executed by defense counsel on behalf of the defendant for misdemeanors and class D felonies subject to certain safeguards: Through August 3rd, for misdemeanors and class D felonies only, defense counsel may, under certain safeguards, execute a guilty plea on behalf of the defendant. This procedure is subject to court approval and requires a series of steps to assure the defendant's knowing and voluntary agreement to the plea.

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.