



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Vito C. Caruso
Deputy Chief Administrative Judge
Courts Outside New York City**

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Virtual Court Operations to Commence This Week in Suffolk County, Seventh and Fifth Judicial Districts

*New York State Courts Remain Open for Business,
Maintaining All Essential and Emergency Proceedings*

NEW YORK—As the New York State Courts continue to calibrate and adjust operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Vito C. Caruso, under the guidance of Chief Judge Janet DiFiore and Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence K. Marks, today announced that the “virtual court” model introduced last week in New York City’s Criminal Court and Family Court to minimize courthouse traffic and contain the spread of the virus is being implemented outside New York City. Virtual court operations will begin this week in Suffolk County’s District Court and County Court; the Rochester area’s Seventh Judicial District; and Central New York’s Fifth Judicial District.

“By minimizing person-to-person contact, the virtual courthouse model enables us to serve the pressing justice needs of New Yorkers across the State while protecting the health and safety of our judges and staff, court users and the public,” said Judge Caruso.

Suffolk County's District Court and County Court

Virtual court operations for essential and emergency matters will commence via video conferencing on Monday, March 30, 2020 and Tuesday, March 31, 2020, respectively, in Suffolk County's District Court and County Court.

"I am appreciative of the support from the criminal justice community, including law enforcement, prosecutors and the defense bar in formulating virtual protocols for all criminal proceedings. Virtual proceedings are the best way to maintain social distancing to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and ensure the continued administration of justice through the duration of the crisis," said Suffolk County Courts' Administrative Judge C. Randall Hinrichs.

On March 16, 2020 Judge Hinrichs announced that all non-essential functions of the Suffolk County Courts were postponed until further notice and that the County's court operations would be consolidated into the Cohalan Court Complex in Central Islip per Administrative Order.

An amendment to this Order allows judges, defendants/litigants, attorneys and some court staff to appear by video-conferencing capability.

A minimal core team of essential staff will remain at each courthouse to ensure the ability to intake papers, operate video conferencing equipment, process orders, keep court record, answer telephones and conduct other essential court functions. The Virtual Courtroom Protocols that were developed apply to all categories of essential court functions and have been distributed to stakeholders.

Judges will preside remotely to hear arraignments, applications for Temporary Orders of Protection, time-served pleas from the jail and any other essential applications. In addition, both County Court and District Court judges will hear time-served pleas, in-custody pleas and other emergency applications remotely from both Yaphank and Riverhead Correctional Facilities.

It is anticipated that by the end of the week all matters presently being heard in Supreme Court and Family Court will be heard virtually.

For more information, visit the Suffolk County Courts' website at <http://ww2.nycourts.gov/courts/10jd/suffolk/index.shtml>.

Seventh Judicial District

Virtual court operations for essential and emergency matters will commence via video conferencing on Monday, March 30, 2020 for all courts within Cayuga, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne and Yates counties.

“Providing the ability to conduct court operations virtually is one way we are helping to stem the spread of the Coronavirus,” said Seventh Judicial District Administrative Judge Craig Doran.

On March 16, 2020, Judge Doran announced that all non-essential functions of the courts were postponed until further notice and that each county's court operations would be consolidated in one building per Administrative Order.

An amendment to this Order allows judges, defendants/litigants, attorneys and some court staff to appear by video conferencing capability.

Judges will preside remotely to hear arraignments, applications for Temporary Orders of Protection, time-served pleas from the jail and any other essential applications.

A minimal core team of essential staff will remain at each courthouse to ensure the ability to intake papers, operate video conferencing equipment, process orders, keep court record, answer telephones and conduct other essential court functions. The Virtual Courtroom Protocols that were developed apply to all categories of essential court functions and have been distributed to stakeholders.

Individuals with court-related questions are encouraged to call their designated county courthouse. Contact information, as well as information related to postponements, is available online for all courthouses in the 7th Judicial District at <http://ww2.nycourts.gov/courts/7jd/index.shtml>.

Fifth Judicial District

Administrative Judge James P. Murphy, whose Judicial District encompasses Herkimer, Lewis, Jefferson, Oneida, Onondaga and Oswego counties, announced the latest measures being instituted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to reduce courthouse traffic while continuing to handle the essential legal needs of New Yorkers served by the District. “It is critically-important that we minimize personal contact in our Courthouses to ‘flatten the curve’ and prevent the spread of this awful virus,” said Judge Murphy.

Building on his prior Administrative Order on March 16, 2020, condensing all court operations within each county into a central location, Judge Murphy has signed another Administrative Order establishing virtual court operations, effective 8:30 a.m. on March 30, 2020, in the Fifth District. In all essential court proceedings, going forward, the judge, court reporters, parties, their attorneys and any other interested party, will not be physically present in the courtroom. A Court Clerk will manage the technology from the courtroom to facilitate the virtual court proceeding.

A minimal core team of essential staff will remain at each courthouse to ensure the ability to intake papers, operate video conferencing equipment, process orders, keep court record, answer telephones and conduct other essential court functions. The Virtual Courtroom Protocols that were developed apply to all categories of essential court functions and have been distributed to stakeholders.

Added the Judge, “I am so proud of the way our judges, court staff, attorneys and law enforcement members have rallied in the past few days and embraced this incredible challenge in these trying times. This could not have occurred without all of their cooperation and dedication to the safety of their communities.”

Individuals with court-related questions are encouraged to call the Fifth Judicial District’s COVID Emergency line at 315-671-4699 (for Oneida County only, call 315-266-4599). Contact information, as well as information related to Administrative Orders and postponements, for the Fifth Judicial District can be found at <http://ww2.nycourts.gov/courts/5jd/index.shtml>.

In addition, due to the suspension of civil statutes of limitation by the Governor’s Executive Order 202.8, all new court filings, either e-filed or hard copy, that are not essential matters, will NOT be accepted.