



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Lawrence K. Marks
Chief Administrative Judge**

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Date: April 6, 2020

Virtual Courts Up and Running Statewide *Courts Remain Open for Essential and Emergency Proceedings*

NEW YORK—The New York State court system continues to institute a variety of temporary emergency measures to deliver essential justice services during these extraordinary times, with Chief Judge Janet DiFiore and Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence K. Marks today reporting that virtual court operations—allowing essential and emergency court proceedings to be conducted remotely—are now in effect statewide. The “virtual court” model, which is being implemented on a temporary basis and was introduced in New York City’s Criminal Court and Family Court on March 25, 2020 and March 26, 2020, respectively, has been rapidly expanded in response to the fast-evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Our shift to a virtual court system has made it possible for participants in essential and emergency proceedings to appear remotely via Skype, dramatically reducing the number of people in our courthouses to protect public health and safety,” said Chief Judge DiFiore in a video message recorded earlier today, crediting the swift rollout of virtual court operations covering all 62 counties of New York to the round-the-clock efforts of the court system’s judges and staff—in particular its technology team—as well as the support of the courts’ many justice partners.

“As we work, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure continued access to the New York State Courts while prioritizing the health and safety of our judges and staff, court users and the public, we have implemented a series of unprecedented, temporary measures: beginning by placing restrictions on courthouse entry by at-risk persons; subsequently consolidating essential matters in a limited number of designated court parts; to today’s statewide transition to virtual court operations, which will eliminate person-to-person contact in court proceedings and minimize courthouse traffic,” said Chief Administrative Judge Marks.

As of today, all essential and emergency court matters—throughout New York City and in every Judicial District outside the City—will be heard virtually, with all interactions taking place by video or telephone.

All non-essential court functions had already been suspended by Administrative Order, with an amendment to this order permitting judges, criminal defendants, civil litigants, attorneys and some court staff to appear by videoconference for essential and emergency court proceedings.

A very small number of Court Clerks and Court Officers will continue to staff these virtual court parts to process critical paperwork and provide essential security. “We are deeply grateful to these dedicated court employees who continue to report to work so that our courts can deliver justice at this critical time,” added Chief Judge DiFiore.

While proceedings will be open to the public, court security personnel will strictly monitor and may limit access to maintain social distancing in accordance with current public health authorities’ guidelines.

As the court system continues to evaluate and adjust its operational plans in response to the pandemic, the Chief Judge also announced that the New York State Courts are working with the Bar and other justice partners to extend virtual court operations beyond the limited categories of essential and emergency matters.

For more information about virtual court operations in your local county or Judicial District, as well as updates relating to COVID-19’s impact on the New York State Courts—including a video and transcript of the Chief Judge’s message—go to:

www.nycourts.gov.