

231ST DISTRICT AND ASSOCIATE COURT
AMENDED GUIDELINES FOR SCHEDULING HEARINGS
ON OR AFTER *OCTOBER 1, 2020*

As you are aware, The Supreme Court of Texas issued a Twenty-Sixth Emergency Order and the Office of Court Administration has reissued guidelines for court proceedings set **on or after October 1, 2020**. Please read our amended guidelines and rules for remote hearings as we have made some changes to improve this process after these last few months. These guidelines are to assist attorneys, staff, and self-represented litigants with the logistics of filing, setting and obtaining signatures during this time.

- **Live Hearings:** Shall be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Court upon request for any *non-essential* case wherein a participant is unable to participate remotely. *Essential* hearings that are impossible or impracticable to conduct remotely will be held in person as scheduled by the Court to ensure compliance with the Courthouse Operating Plan and the health and safety of all participants. If there are health concerns with any participant of an essential hearing, you must notify the Court immediately. Protective Order hearings and Contempt hearings in the Associate Court will be set ON TUESDAYS and participants must comply with the Courthouse Operating Plan which is contained on our website. *(Cases considered to be “essential” are contempt actions, protective orders, writs, CPS removals, and extraordinary relief temporary restraining orders.)*
- **Protective Orders:** These will still be set on Tuesdays in the Associate Court and in-person. If you e-file the Ex Parte Order along with your Application, you must walk it through in person and have it set by the Coordinator at that time. DO NOT email the Court Coordinator the same documents you e-file and/or walk through. Our Coordinator receives 200 emails on average per day right now, so this will help decrease the incoming emails.
- **Enforcements:** Once e-filed, please email the Coordinator for dates along with your Orders to Appear/Show Cause. These will also be set on Tuesdays and will be in-person.
- **Extraordinary Relief TRO’s/Emergency Motions:** These must be walked through in person for signature and setting. You must have your client or person who executed the supporting affidavit available for the Court if necessary as well as any other party or attorney required to be notified. Please try to present these between 9:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. or notify the Court if you must present it at another time.
- **DO NOT delete the “Order to Appear in person” language containing the Courthouse address on the above-referenced Ex Parte or Show Cause Orders.**
- **Temporary Orders:** In an initial proceeding that contains requests for temporary orders, do not e-file a plain vanilla TRO. Attach the current Standing Orders, and once the Respondent is served and the citation is filed, you may contact the Coordinator for setting dates after the answer deadline, and once confirmed you can submit the appropriate Notice of Hearing for signature.

- **E-filing:** Please continue to e-file or email Agreed and Conformed Orders for entry electronically. **Remember, if you e-file, DO NOT also email it to the Coordinator, he will get it from our clerks.*
- **Prove-ups:** For any Final Order that requires a record, please contact the Court Coordinator to schedule it. DO NOT just show up in person with your client for a prove-up, as these are handled remotely. **Please continue to e-file agreements for electronic signature as we will continue to electronically sign Agreed Final Orders so long as there is a waiver or service return on file and all signatures.*
- **Pre-Trials:** Please follow the same procedure as for Prove-ups above. These will also be handled remotely and scheduled by the Coordinator.
- **Trials:** All final trials are presumed remote, unless otherwise pre-approved by the Court.
- **Dismissal Docket:** No cases will be dismissed at this time, or until further guidance from the SCOT/OCA.
- **Adoptions:** These must be scheduled through the Court Coordinator.
- **Writs:** Will be done in-person and will be set by the Court at that time.
- **ZOOM INFORMATION - NOTICES, INVITATIONS & HEARINGS:**
 - *The email you have on file and listed in JIMS is where the Zoom invites are sent. It is your responsibility to forward it to a different email for an attorney or litigant if desired – not the Courts.*
 - *The petitioning or moving party/attorney who sets the hearing is responsible for notifying all respondents/opposing parties of your notice of hearing and the Zoom information/invitation just like you did pre-covid. It is NOT the responsibility of the Court to email Zoom invites/notices to legal staff, witnesses, or other necessary parties - so please do not email our staff with lists of email addresses to whom you'd like Zoom invites sent. We do our best to send to the active emails in JIMS.*
 - *Instruct your client/witness to DRESS AND BEHAVE APPROPRIATELY during a Zoom hearing PRIOR to the hearing. If a participant is dressed inappropriately or fails to be in a quiet, secluded area which results in disruption, they could be dismissed from the hearing. ALL participants should have the same respect in a Zoom hearing as they should here in our Courtroom.*
 - *Make sure you, your client, and any witnesses' device has the audio and video enabled and working ahead of time, as well as a proper name posted for the Court to identify each participant.*
 - *Attorneys and self-represented litigants should be able to share their screen for the purposes of exhibits, as well as have copies of all proposed exhibits with them for the Zoom hearing.*

Please understand that we are much more limited in time for hearings due to the current guidelines we must follow. Therefore, we will continue to set strict time and witness limits to keep our dockets moving.