

COVID-19 OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

FAMILY COURT – DIVISION 14

Date: April 28, 2021

From: Joseph P. Whyte, Circuit Judge

To: Presiding Judge Michael Stelzer, Court Administrator Nathan Graves, and Circuit Clerk Thomas Kloepfinger

Re: COVID-19 Response: Resumption of Court in Phase 3

OPERATING PHASE THREE

Status Conferences, Non-contested hearings, and Default hearings: Division 14 will continue to conduct status conferences, non-contested hearings, and default hearings by Webex video on Mondays. (Monday video hearings will continue to be scheduled through tracy.wells@courts.mo.gov.) On Tuesday mornings, *beginning Tuesday, July 13, 2021*, such hearings will be conducted in-person. (Tuesday in-person hearings can be scheduled through the Circuit's website at www.stlcitycircuitcourt.com) For in-person hearings, courtroom occupancy will be limited to allow for operation under social distancing protocols. (In Division 14, it appears the Courtroom can be set up to accommodate up to 26 people, plus staff, and keep them all 6 feet apart when seated.) Rules on the continued use of face masks/coverings will follow orders from health department officials and guidelines. Division 14 will use tape or other means to demark six-foot distances. Signage and floor markings will remain to ensure distancing requirements are met. Staff will observe distancing requirements in the office and public hallways.

Order of Protection dockets: Order of Protection (OP) dockets shall continue to have first call settings through WebEx. Historically, the majority of first call settings result in continuances for service or dismissals for failing to appear. At the times when both parties appear at first setting on WebEx, they will be given two options: (1) the hearing may proceed over WebEx at that time or (2) a short continuance will be granted if either party requests an in-person hearing. **In Person Hearings:** Parties will be allowed in person hearings at the request of one of the parties at the initial WebEx hearing. Courtroom occupancy will be limited to allow each Division hearing Orders of Protection to operate under social distancing protocols. Rules on the continued use of face masks/coverings will follow orders from health department officials and guidelines. Signage and floor markings will remain to ensure distancing requirements are met.

Filing Order of Protection Petitions: Order of Protection Petitions will still be allowed to be completed online at www.stlcitycircuitcourt.com Parties will be allowed to file Petitions in person in room 901. Only the Petitioner shall be allowed into Room 901. Only three Petitioners will be allowed in room 901 at one time. Court staff will observe distancing requirements in the office and public hallways. All staff will resume normal in-office work.

Contested Hearings and Trials: Division 14 will conduct all trials and contested testimonial hearings in-person, *beginning June 7, 2021*. These will generally take place on Wednesdays and Thursdays. For in-person hearings and trials, courtroom occupancy will be limited to allow for operation under social distancing protocols. (In Division 14, it appears the Courtroom can be set up to accommodate up to 26 people, plus staff, and keep them all 6 feet apart when seated.) Rules on the continued use of face masks/coverings will follow orders from health department officials and guidelines. Division 14 will use tape or other means to demark six-foot distances. Signage and floor markings will remain to ensure distancing requirements are met. Court staff will observe distancing requirements in the office and public hallways.

Probation Revocation Docket: Division will conduct Its Probation Revocation docket remotely, except for contested revocation hearings, which will be held in person. Probation revocation initial hearings and status hearings will generally take place on Thursday afternoons. For the probation revocation docket, courtroom occupancy will be limited to allow for operation under social distancing protocols. (In Division 14, it appears the Courtroom can be set up to accommodate up to 26 people, plus staff, and keep them all 6 feet apart when seated.) Rules on the continued use of face masks/coverings will follow orders from health department officials and guidelines. Division 14 will use tape or other means to demark six-foot distances. Signage and floor markings will remain to ensure distancing requirements are met. Court staff will observe distancing requirements in the office and public hallways.