

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS



THIRTY-NINTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA FRANKLIN AND FULTON COUNTY BRANCHES

SHAWN D. MEYERS
PRESIDENT JUDGE

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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 18, 2020

39th JUDICIAL DISTRICT – FRANKLIN AND FULTON COUNTIES

COVID-19 JUDICIAL EMERGENCY ORDER FOR THE 39TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

On March 16, 2020, Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Thomas Saylor, issued an Order authorizing the President Judges of each judicial district to within their discretion declare a judicial emergency and take such actions necessary to protect the public health and the health and safety of the employees of the judiciary and related offices. While protecting public health the courts must still provide access to the courts and assure constitutionally required proceedings are conducted.

Today, March 18, 2020, President Judge Shawn D. Meyers has declared the 39th Judicial District to be under a state of “judicial emergency” effective immediately and continuing through Friday, April 3, 2020 with the possibility of extending the order if necessary. While the courthouses and court facilities including Magisterial District Offices in both Franklin and Fulton Counties will remain open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., most proceedings are canceled and will be rescheduled after April 3, 2020. Parties who have matters scheduled, should contact their attorney or Court Administration at (717)-261-3848 to determine if your matter before the Court of Common Pleas has been canceled or is still on the docket. Anyone having a case pending before a Magisterial District Judge please contact the office where the matter is scheduled to see if the matter will be heard or continued. Filing offices have alternate means for the filing of documents that substantially reduce direct interaction with staff, including drop boxes in the lobby of the courthouses, filing via email and delivery of filings through the United States Postal Service. Only parties to emergency matters will be admitted for the purpose of filing and appearing before the court for the proceeding. All others will be denied access to the courthouse or court facility. Jury trials, both criminal and civil, as well as jury selection scheduled during the emergency period are canceled.

The Sheriff's Office and County Offices located in either courthouse or a facility housing a court, will continue to provide access to the public, subject to the rules of access established by the respective offices.

President Judge Meyers, the entire board of Judges and Court Administration appreciate the cooperation that has been provided by County government, the Board of Commissioners, the various public and private offices affected and the members of the bar associations of both counties who have joined together with the community at large to insure all reasonable efforts are made to preserve and protect the public safety while still assuring access to the courts.

The Court, in conjunction with the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, and local County Governments in the 39th Judicial District will continue to closely monitor developments on the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Public health officials, along with the Governor's office, recommend mitigation strategies including social distancing and minimizing large gatherings in an effort to inhibit transmission of the coronavirus.

In an effort to keep Court facilities in the 39th Judicial District safe to visitors and employees, in addition to the revised operating procedures at court facilities, the President Judge and Court Administration, are encouraging the following:

- Limited travel: Court employees are encouraged to limit personal travel.
- Stay home if you are feeling sick. Any party under Court Order to appear for a proceeding of any type, but is not feeling well, should make a reasonable attempt to notify the Court Administration Office at 717-261-3848 of their illness. Those individuals who are represented by an attorney should ask their attorney to notify the court of your condition and ask that you be excused in advance, or that you be permitted to appear via alternate methods such as video or teleconference. Each case will be decided by the court on a case by case basis.
- Practice good hygiene. When in a Court facility please refrain from shaking hands or other forms of physical contact. Use other noncontact methods of greeting. Please wash your hands or use hand sanitizer at regular intervals. Create habits and reminders to avoid touching faces and cover coughs and sneezes.

For up-to-date information, visit:

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

Department of Health: <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

Together as a community we can decrease the spread of the coronavirus.

For more information, please contact Mark Singer, District Court Administrator for the 39th Judicial District, at msinger@franklincountypa.gov or 717-261-3848.

