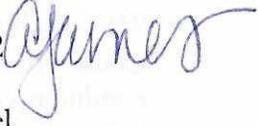


March 16, 2020

To: All Attorneys of Record, Court Appointed Special Advocate Programs and *Pro se* litigants in Child Protection Court cases currently pending in Angelina, Brazos, Grimes, Madison and Walker Counties.

From: Judge Andrea James, Associate Judge, Second Region Child Protection Court #2 

RE: Second Region Child Protection Court Number 2 Procedures for the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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On March 13, 2020 Governor Greg Abbott declared a state of disaster for all counties in the State of Texas as a result of the threat to public health posed by COVID-19. On the same date, the Supreme Court of Texas issued the First Emergency Order Regarding the COVID-19 State of Disaster (hereinafter “emergency order.”)

Pursuant to the emergency order, subject only to constitutional limitations, all courts may, “and must to avoid risk to court staff, parties, attorneys, jurors, and the public.” This includes taking measures, without a participant’s consent, to “modify or suspend any and all deadlines and procedures, whether prescribed by statute, rule, or order, for a stated period ending no later than 30 days after the Governor’s state of disaster has been lifted.” The emergency order further permits all courts to allow or require anyone involved in any hearing, including a party, attorney, witness or court reporter, to participate remotely, such as by teleconferencing, videoconferencing or other means. The emergency order further allows courts to consider as evidence sworn statements made out of court or sworn testimony given remotely by teleconferencing or videoconferencing. This emergency order is effective as of March 13, 2020 and expires on May 8, 2020 unless extended by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. A copy of the emergency order is attached to this communication.

Therefore, effective March 16, 2020:

- all non-essential hearings currently pending before Second Region Child Protection Court Number 2 **shall be held as scheduled but will be by teleconference in order to avoid risk to court staff, parties, witnesses, attorneys, and the public;**
- those matters before Second Region Child Protection Court Number 2 with currently pending trial dates prior to April 1, 2020 **will be held as scheduled with the option for any person wishing to participate by teleconference having the option to do so;**
- all currently scheduled adversary hearings before Second Region Child Protection Court Number 2 **will be conducted as currently scheduled with any person wishing to participate by teleconference having the option to do so;** and,
- all matters before Second Region Child Protection Court Number 2 with dismissal dates prior to April 1, 2020 shall have dismissal dates extended until May 7, 2020 in accordance with the emergency order.

For those impacted cases before Second Region Child Protection Court Number 2, amended orders including extensions of dismissal dates, when applicable, shall be issued no later than March

20, 2020 and shall include the teleconferencing number to be utilized for each of these Child Protection Court hearings.

Any person who is confirmed to have COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms, a fever, or who is coughing or sneezing, is encouraged to contact the court coordinator, Tracy Conroy, by telephone at 936-539-7929 before appearing at any scheduled hearing before Second Region Child Protection Court Number 2. Any attorney who knows that a client, witness or other persons with such condition(s) are also encouraged to notify the court coordinator in advance of any court appearance before Second Region Child Protection Court Number 2. This notification is necessary so that reasonable accommodations may be considered, including the potential for rescheduling a court appearance or arrange for such appearance to be made by teleconference or videoconference.

Litigants are strongly encouraged to communicate electronically and/or telephonically amongst themselves to explore the potential for resolutions and/or agreed orders (where appropriate). Additionally, for agreed orders in matters which require sworn testimony, such sworn testimony should be presented by affidavit. If an agreed order is proposed, such proposed agreed order (and affidavit, where necessary) should be filed along with a written request for a setting by submission.

Second Region Child Protection Court Number 2 will proceed under these protocols until further orders come from the Supreme Court of Texas and/or Court of Criminal Appeals, the Presiding Judge of the Second Judicial Region or county authority. Please understand this is a very fluid situation and the plan as set out here is subject to change as conditions warrant. Any questions for Region 2 Child Protection Court Number 2 regarding these directives should be addressed via email to the court coordinator, Tracy Conroy, at [Tracy.Conroy@txcourts.gov](mailto:Tracy.Conroy@txcourts.gov).

cc: Hon. Donald Kramer, Presiding Judge, 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court of Grimes, Madison and Walker Counties  
Hon. Kyle Hawthorne, Presiding Judge, 85<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court of Brazos County  
Hon. Paul White, Presiding Judge, 159<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court of Angelina County  
Hon. Bob Inselman, Presiding Judge, 217<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court of Angelina County  
Hon. Travis B. Bryan, III, Presiding Judge, 272<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District Court of Brazos County  
Hon. Hal Ridley, Presiding Judge, 278<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court of Madison and Walker Counties  
Hon. Steve Smith, Presiding Judge, 361<sup>st</sup> Judicial District Court of Brazos County  
Hon. Albert M. McCaig, Presiding Judge, 506<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court of Grimes County  
Hon. Clyde Herrington, Presiding Judge, County Court at Law Number Two of Angelina County  
Hon. Tuck McLain, Presiding Judge, County Court at Law of Grimes County  
Hon. Tracy Sorensen, Presiding Judge, County Court at Law of Walker County