

TEMPORARY CHANGES REGARDING THE CIVIL DOCKET, AND THE PROBATE, GUARDIANSHIP AND MENTAL ILLNESS HEARINGS HELD IN COUNTY COURT AT LAW NO. 1

Beginning March 19, 2020, and continuing until April 10, 2020, the following changes will be implemented regarding the above-named hearings/trials:

CIVIL CASES

1. The Texas Supreme Court has determined that **no civil cases are essential**. Attorneys, please contact this Court if you have a case that you feel is, in fact, essential and the Court will make a determination.

MENTAL ILLNESS HEARINGS

2. All Jury Trials and pre-trials will be rescheduled. The attorneys will be notified by court staff.
3. In **Mental Illness Probable Cause and Temporary Commitment hearings/Medication hearings**, the proposed patient will NOT be transported to the courthouse. If their appearance is required, it will be handled at the facility requesting the hearing. If witnesses are needed on behalf of either party, those witnesses may appear telephonically.
4. There will be no warrants for pickup of patients issued at the courthouse. The CRD (Crisis Response Division) will continue to go to evaluate the proposed patients and, if CRD determines the need for transportation to a mental health facility, CRD will do a warrantless detention as in the past. The mental health facility will then do an evaluation and, if it is determined that a proposed patient should be kept for evaluation, the facility will issue a request. If the CRD or the mental health facility do not feel that an evaluation is needed, a warrant will not issued through the County Attorney's Office.
5. Otherwise, the Mental Illness docket will continue on Mondays and Thursdays as usual.

PROBATE AND GUARDIANSHIP CASES

1. In **Probate and Guardianship Cases**, only essential hearings will be held. **Essential hearings are temporary restraining orders: temporary injunctions; temporary guardianships and temporary administrations, if needed; and creation of guardianships (NOT administrations)**. Please handle as many cases by submission as possible. Any other hearings will need to be approved by the Court prior to setting.
2. In **Guardianships**, the *Attorney ad Litem* will still be required to visit the proposed ward. If an *ad Litem* is appointed by the Court, but that person feels that a personal visit with the proposed ward would not be in the best interest of the *ad Litem's* health, that *ad Litem* should let the Court know immediately so that another *ad Litem* can be appointed.
3. The proposed wards should not be brought to court for the hearings until further notice. This applies to children not part of the case being heard. Because of health concerns, other arrangements must be made for their care during the court hearings.
4. In **Probate** cases, send a copy of the Will to the County Clerk's Office, but bring the original Wills to court at the time of the hearing to avoid the original getting lost in the

mail or not available at the time of the hearing. This applies to original death certificates also. Death Certificates are to be filed within 3 days of filing of the application for probate. That may be a copy, with the original being provided to the court at the time of the hearing.

5. If the applicant or any witnesses feel that coming to court is hazardous to their health, they may appear telephonically. They may execute their proof of death testimony and other relevant testimony, as well as the applicant taking their oath, in front of a notary. The County Clerk's Office will not be doing prove-ups until further notice. These documents can then be e-filed.
6. Original Bonds will need to be mailed into the County Clerk.
7. No cash bonds will be accepted. They can be sent to the Clerk's office with a cashier's check or money order.

Should there be any questions, please contact the Court and my staff and I will be happy to help.

Jeanne Parker

Judge Presiding

Bell County Court at Law No. 1

1201 Huey Road, Belton, Texas 76513

254-933-6722