

Frequently Asked Questions –Family Law

(Provided by the Tarrant County Family Law Bar Association)

Are the family courts open right now? When are they supposed to reopen?

The family courts are closed except for emergency hearings at this time, and may continue to be closed, due to a mandate from the Texas Supreme Court, until May 8.

- a. Emergency hearings would include Writs of Habeas Corpus/Attachment (when you are trying to get your kids for visitation or to get them returned home after a visit with the other parent).
- b. Emergency hearings are NOT hearings for Temporary Orders following the filing of a new divorce, unless there is an extraordinary circumstance that requires the judge to issue orders for the other parent NOT to have access to the child(ren), or there is domestic violence such that a judge needs to issue orders to get the spouse/partner to leave the marital home.
- c. Some of the family law courts will allow a hearing of a non-emergency nature, for instance to begin child support or temporary spousal support, but all require those hearings to be either by teleconference or the Zoom meeting application.

What do I do if I'm in the middle of a Divorce and/or Modification and/or Suit Affecting the Parent Child Relationship?

If you are in an ongoing divorce and/or modification and/or suit affecting the parent child relationship, then you could attempt to mediate during this time, as most, if not all, the mediators are allowing mediations to go forward using the Zoom meeting application. At any rate, contact your attorney and she/he will guide you about what you can and can't get done during this time.

What do I do if I don't have an attorney? Can I still complete my divorce/modification/SAPCR?

All of the courts in Tarrant County have directives about procedures during this time of social distancing and isolation. You should contact the clerk of the court that your case is proceeding in, to see how the judges in that court want you to have hearings, or reschedule hearings. Divorce, modifications and SAPCR actions are not easy without an attorney in good times, it will be doubly hard at this time, so reach out to the Tarrant County Bar Association for a referral to an attorney who could assist you complete your case.

How long will this situation continue? How long will the courts be closed?

No one knows for sure, but at this time the Texas Supreme Court anticipates that we may be able to have in-person hearings beginning after May 8, as that is the date given in their initial directive. Again, if you have an attorney, check with him/her about updates for future court dates and resets for hearings. If you don't have an attorney, contact the clerk of your court, or the court coordinator. All the family law courts have a web page online with their contact numbers listed.