

322nd District Court Supplement to the COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Tarrant County Judiciary

On June 5, 2020 this Court received the updated plan for the operation of the Judiciary on and after June 1, 2020 known as the *COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Tarrant County Judiciary* and will be referred to in this supplement as the "Operating Plan."

The Operating Plan sets forth general rules and procedures to be followed and specifically for "in person hearings" under the category entitled "Scheduling."

The 322nd District Court, by this document, will supplement the Operating Plan.

This document deals with the current policies for ZOOM and "in person" hearings and the conducting of Court business during COVID-19.

General Procedures.

1. All hearings will be conducted remotely by ZOOM unless it can be shown to the Judge hearing the case that a remote hearing cannot reasonably be successfully conducted.

2. Associate Judge Kaitcer will still handle the signing of and setting of any "in person" extra-ordinary TROs, Temporary Ex Parte Protective Orders and Writs of Habeas Corpus with a Writ of Attachment. These matters are still available to be handled "in person;" if, however, they can be handled by ZOOM, it is encouraged to do so.

Child Protective Services cases, including removals, have been referred to Associate Judge Brown pursuant to the procedures she has established. If Associate Judge Brown is unavailable then, Judge Munford will handle, "in person" the signing of and setting any Child Protective Services "Removal Cases. "

3. Associate Judge Kaitcer will be referred the following cases: (1) Cases requiring a Temporary Hearing, (2) Protective Order Cases (3) and Discovery issues. Lindsey Baker, the Court Coordinator, is on maternity leave; the Auxiliary Coordinator, Lisa Arnesen will handle setting dates and times of the hearings. Associate Judge Kaitcer will handle sending out the ZOOM notifications and the ZOOM conference Identification number. He may be contacted at (817) 884-3030 or JNKaitcer@tarrantcounty.com.

Judge Munford will handle all other matters. The procedures to follow setting a hearing are identical to that of Associate Judge Kaitcer. Any request for a setting should be through the Court Coordinator, Ms. Lindsey Baker, and if she is not available due to maternity leave, then through the Auxiliary Coordinator, Ms. Lisa Arnesen at larnesen@tarrantcounty.com.

Ms. Lindsey Baker or Ms. Lisa Arnesen will handle Pretrial Scheduling Orders.

In Person Hearings.

If an "in person" hearing is desired, a request should be made at the time of the e-filing preferably in a statement following the signature block in bold, all CAPS and underlined, "**AN IN-PERSON HEARING IS REQUESTED.**" Counsel requesting the in-person hearing shall arrange for a time to begin a telephonic conference. For a hearing before Judge Munford, counsel shall arrange this through email to the Court Coordinators. For a hearing before Associate Judge Kaitcer, counsel shall contact Associate Judge Kaitcer at his contact information set forth in 3 above.

ZOOM Hearings.

To implement a ZOOM hearing please use the following procedure:

1. After a pleading and hearing notice is e-filed, the Court Coordinator should be contacted either by telephone (817) 884-1597 or email (LKBaker@tarrantcounty.com) or Ms. Lisa Arnesen for a setting.

For any temporary hearing request during Ms. Lindsey Baker's maternity leave it is anticipated that Associate Judge Kaitcer will be forwarded Court correspondence by the Auxiliary Court Coordinator with dates and times but thereafter he will be responsible for sending the ZOOM notices.

When Ms. Baker is out on maternity leave the Auxiliary Coordinator, Ms. Lisa Arnesen, will handle the District Court's Docket. Judge Munford's procedures for setting a ZOOM hearing will be identical to Associate Judge Kaitcer's procedures. Trial settings will be handled through a Pre-Trial Scheduling Order and should be designated as a ZOOM trial and noted on the Order.

2. Upon contact with the Coordinators, please discuss the type of hearing being requested and the time needed for that hearing. While ZOOM is the preferred mandate under our Supreme Court Order, please keep in mind, ZOOM hearings have limitations.

3. When submitting an Order for Hearing or a Notification of a Final Trial, the document should contain a list of appropriate email addresses for all sides as well as a space for the ZOOM conference number. The Court will set up to host the ZOOM hearing based on the information contained in the Order for Hearing; however, any witness to be called at the time of trial or hearing should be forwarded the link by the side desiring to call that witness.

To keep the process from becoming too onerous, the Court is requesting, but not mandating, that the ZOOM hearing be conducted with each attorney and their client or the self-represented litigant, at the attorney's office or if self-represented at a central location where the email is sent. Any witnesses should also be at that location as well. The location should be set up for the examination of a witness.

4. The Judge conducting the ZOOM hearing will host the ZOOM hearing. The Court will initiate the ZOOM hearing, on the date and time of the hearing.

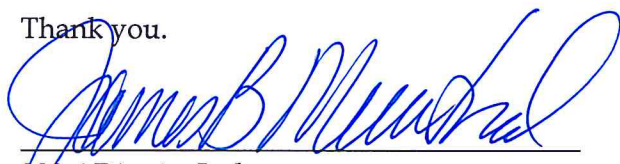
5. Any exhibits should be exchanged one business day prior to the time and date of the Supplemental Procedures for COVID-19

hearing. However, a formal Pretrial Order supersedes this procedure. Scanning and sending them to the opposing side in PDF format, by email, is suggested. It is the responsibility of the person desiring to offer the exhibits into evidence to see that the Court, counsel or self-represented litigant has been sent a copy of the exhibits prior to the hearing.

Any exhibits not pre-exchanged under the ZOOM system make them problematic to be admitted into evidence. The exhibits should also be sent directly to the Court Reporter for the Judge hearing the case. For Judge Munford, Linda Vera, lyvera@tarrantcounty.com. For Associate Judge Kaitcer, if a Court Reporter is to be utilized, Hillary Dobson, hbdobson@tarrantcounty.com.

6. The witnesses, attorneys and parties are expected to dress professionally. To the extent possible the Texas Rules of Procedure will be followed.

Thank you.



322nd District Judge
James B. Munford