

Beginning January 11<sup>th</sup> the new guidelines for the 29<sup>th</sup> Supreme Court of Texas Emergency Order will be implemented in the Juvenile District Courts. A copy of the order the order is included as an attachment.

***To all Counsel and Parties: In accordance with the Emergency Orders from the Texas Supreme Court and the guidance from OCA, UNLESS that proceeding meets one of the exceptions set out by the OCA, court proceedings SHALL be conducted remotely over Zoom, you will be required to attend remotely, and you will be prohibited from attending the proceeding in person.***

Attorneys, please note the order from the SCTX that reads: *“that no court participants have tested positive for COVID-19 within the previous 30 days, currently have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had recent known exposure to COVID-19.” If a witness, client, or any individual meets this criteria please notify the court for next steps.*

OCA has mandated that “[t]he judge **shall inform** each counsel and pro se litigant that the hearing **shall be conducted remotely over Zoom**. The judge shall provide each counsel and pro se litigant a phone number or email address to inform the judge if they believe any counsel, their clients, a pro se litigant, any witness, an interpreter, or any other participant (all referred to below as “Participant”) cannot participate remotely.” There is a lengthy criteria to be used “to determine when an in-person proceeding is necessary and when all reasonable efforts do not permit the proceeding to be conducted remotely.”

This new guidance does not affect grand jury or jury trials. Again – this new guidance does not affect grand jury or jury trials.

**An example of court considerations for in-person findings is included as an attachment.**

#### **Important Notes From the Guideline:**

- **For Detention Court Hearings- PARENTS OR A GUARDIAN CAN BE ALLOWED TO ATTEND IN-PERSON. An in-person finding can be made for a parent or guardian under examples six and nine of the sample in-person order. Please be prepared to present the request to the court in advance of the hearing.**
- The new guidance does NOT affect the ability to conduct jury trials or grand jury proceedings as those proceedings are covered by separate requirements;
- The new guidance does NOT affect proceedings where one party appears in person due to a lack of ability to participate remotely, a need to provide fingerprints or be taken into custody, etc, but where other participants participate remotely;
- The new guidance does NOT permit judges to conduct in-person hearings contrary to the Supreme Court’s Emergency Orders or OCA Guidance, which require that judges use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.

#### **Beginning January 11, 2021**

- For delinquency matters, each respondent should email or call their attorney, juvenile probation department or the court determine the Zoom information.
- For dependency matters, each participant should call or email their attorney or contact the court for zoom information for their matter.

**315<sup>th</sup> Court Contact Information:**

Ms. Riley is currently out of the office. Please include one of the following contacts to emails:  
Yavaka Pete at [Yavaka\\_Pete@justex.net](mailto:Yavaka_Pete@justex.net) or Michelle Billingsley-Mexicano at [Michelle\\_Billingsley-Mexicano@Justex.net](mailto:Michelle_Billingsley-Mexicano@Justex.net) 713-222-4871

**315<sup>th</sup> Juvenile Probation Liaisons:** Chanelle Scott at [Chanelle.Scott@hcjpd.hctx.net](mailto:Chanelle.Scott@hcjpd.hctx.net) or Amanda Torres at [Amanda.Torres@hcjpd.hctx.net](mailto:Amanda.Torres@hcjpd.hctx.net)