

NEWS FROM THE DORCHESTER COUNTY PROBATE COURT

March 19, 2020

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR AN EMERGENCY G/C APPOINTMENT

- Summons (SCCA #401PC)
- Petition for Appointment of Guardian and/or Conservator (Forms #530GC, 540GC, or 520GC)
- Filing Fee of \$150
- Motion for Emergency Relief and Hearing (Form #512GC)
- Supporting Affidavit Listing the Allegations per § 62-5-108A(1)
- Motion and Order for Appointment of Counsel (Form #523GC)
- Motion and Order for Appointment of GAL (Form #527GC)
- Physician's Affidavit for Emergency or Temporary Proceedings (Form #522GC) – Examination must have occurred within 30 days prior to filing

If an Ex Parte Order for Emergency Relief is issued, then the moving party must immediately serve all interested parties with the Order and pleadings. A hearing will be held within 10 working days, or as soon as practical.

COURT'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

On a monthly basis, approximately 600 people visit the Dorchester County Probate Court office in person for services. These services often involve detailed one-on-one meetings and review of documents, much like how attorneys meet with their clients. Following the suggestions of healthcare professionals, directives from the South Carolina Supreme Court, and the Dorchester County Government, the Probate Court will do its part to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

During this time, the Probate Court will continue to focus on serving the citizens of Dorchester County, and all of our practicing attorneys, using modified programs, staffing, and procedures. The Probate Court will conduct its business via phone, e-mail, teleconferencing, and mail. As the Dorchester County government has already closed our lobbies and courtrooms, except for emergency hearings, the Court has continued all non-emergency hearings currently scheduled through March 31st. The Court has also postponed all Opening Probate Seminars until the Governor lifts the state of emergency.

We will still be working to handle emergency issues and manage cases. Further, we will continue to hold all emergency mental health and chemical dependency hearings using video-conferencing technology.

Please understand that the Probate Court staff may be limited in this trying period, but we will continue to strive to do our best to respond to your needs.

THE BEST WAY TO CONTACT OUR OFFICE IS BY EMAIL:

- **Morgan Lawley** (Decedent's last name beginning with A-K): mlawley@dorchestercountysc.gov
- **Missi Wooten** (Decedent's last name beginning with L-Z): mwooten@dorchestercountysc.gov
- **Nancy Lentz** (Guardianships and Conservatorships): nlentz@dorchestercountysc.gov
- **Nikki Collins** (Commitments): acollins@dorchestercountysc.gov
- **Melissa Burns** (Clerk of Probate/Marriage Licenses): mburns@dorchestercountysc.gov

A Personal Note from Judge Mary Blunt and Associate Judge Molly Edwards

We want to let all of our attorneys know that we strive to be available to you during this difficult time. If you need to reach either of us, please e-mail Judge Blunt at mblunt@dorchestercountysc.gov and Associate Judge Molly Edwards at medwards@dorchestercountysc.gov.