

State of South Carolina
The Family Court of the Ninth Judicial Circuit
Daniel E. Martin, Jr.
Judge
Charleston County Judicial Center
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Charleston, SC 29401
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March 23, 2020

Charleston County Family Court Bar

RE: HEARINGS AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS

Dear Members of the Bar:

I hope this letter greets you all in good health. Please know that the health and safety of everyone who enters our beautiful courthouse is always our paramount concern. As public servants, we appreciate the financial uncertainty and psychological trauma that these precarious times may have placed you, your families and your clients into almost overnight. However, we are unable to continue business as usual and are restricted to hold only emergency hearing as ordered by the Chief Justice. A copy of his March 18, 2020, order is attached to this letter.

If you have consent orders, please continue to send those in.

Agreements, both temporary and final, may be considered as long as duly executed affidavits in lieu of appearance(s) are submitted by all parties along with the proposed consent orders signed by the parties and/or their attorneys. Name changes can also be submitted as long as all required documents and affidavits are included together with the proposed orders. Final divorces are not considered emergencies and therefore will not be scheduled until after the Chief Justice lifts the order. If there are matters that can be addressed without the need for an appearance, they may be considered on a case by case basis. We all hope to resume normal activities as soon as possible. Be safe.

Sincerely,

DANIEL E. MARTIN, JR.
Chief Administrative Judge

2020-03-19-01

The Supreme Court of South Carolina

RE: Mediation Settlement Conferences

ORDER

In recognition of the difficulties the COVID-19 pandemic may have on lawyers, parties, and other persons whose physical presence is ordinarily required in mediation settlement conferences governed by the South Carolina Court-Annexed Alternative Dispute Resolution Rules, I find it necessary to temporarily adjust the usual manner of attendance at mediation settlement conferences required by Rule 6(b) of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Rules. Pursuant to Article V, Section 4 of the South Carolina Constitution, it is ordered that, upon the request of a required attendee, the Chief Judge for Administrative Purposes of the circuit shall issue an order permitting attendance by video conferencing. This Order is effectively immediately and remains in effect until modified or rescinded by order of the Chief Justice.

s/Donald W. Beatty _____
Donald W. Beatty
Chief Justice of South Carolina

Columbia, South Carolina
March 19, 2020

2020-03-18-03

The Supreme Court of South Carolina

Re: Family Court Schedule and Judicial Travel

ORDER

Pursuant to the provisions of Article V, Section 4 of the South Carolina Constitution and S.C. Code Ann. §§ 63-3-320; -340 (2010),

IT IS ORDERED that all Family Court Judges shall return to their home circuits and follow the directives as outlined in my Trial Courts Coronavirus Memorandum dated March 16, 2020. Unless otherwise ordered, only emergency hearings shall be held pursuant to my Statewide Family Court Order dated March 18, 2020.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that each Chief Judge for Administrative Purposes shall prepare weekly schedules for their circuit's emergency hearings through May 1, 2020 and shall forward such schedules to Court Administration. In the event that the circuit does not have an adequate number of judges to cover emergency hearings due to previously-scheduled leave or illness, the Chief Judge for Administrative Purposes shall notify Judges' Scheduling at Court Administration so that another judge can be assigned as deemed necessary.

Until further ordered, all Family Court Judges shall only preside over hearings in their home circuit beginning March 23, 2020 unless they receive an Order assigning them to a county outside of their circuit.

All previously scheduled terms of court from March 23, 2020 through May 1, 2020 are hereby canceled, and all judges who are not assigned to vacation, official leave or an Administrative Week shall be assigned to chambers.

s/Donald W. Beatty _____
Donald W. Beatty
Chief Justice of South Carolina

*Columbia, South Carolina
March 18, 2020*