STATE OF MAINE JUDICIAL BRANCH
PANDEMIC MANAGEMENT ORDER
Order Issued March 30, 2020

Pandemic Management Order from the Maine Trial Court Chiefs Consolidating, Ratifying, and Superseding Previous Orders

Since March 13, 2020, in light of public health concerns arising from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the trial court chiefs of Maine's Judicial Branch have issued a number of Emergency Orders in order to adhere to the guidance provided by the Maine and United States Centers for Disease Control and in order to comply with the Governor's Executive Order 19. This Order consolidates some of those orders into one document and clarifies, corrects, and ratifies those orders. The earlier orders are no longer in effect but may be found in the "Superseded Rules" section of the Judicial Branch's COVID-19 website.

PMO-TC-1(A). EMERGENCY ORDER CONCERNING JURY TRIALS, TRAVERSE JURORS, AND GRAND JURIES

In light of public health concerns arising from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), effective immediately, no jury trials shall be conducted for the months of April and May 2020, and no prospective trial jurors shall be summonsed for the month of May 2020 by the respective Clerks of the Unified Criminal Courts. Additionally, no grand jury proceedings will be conducted and no grand juries will meet during the months of April and May. This Emergency Order shall be reviewed on a monthly basis by the trial court chiefs.

Pursuant to M.R.U. Crim. P. 48(b)(2), the State is obligated to present felony charges to a grand jury within a reasonable period of time. If no indictment against a defendant has been returned by the grand jury within that reasonable period, a court is required to dismiss the complaint against that defendant, unless the attorney for the State moves to enlarge the period and shows the court good cause why the complaint should remain on the docket. This emergency order does not abrogate the State's requirement to file such motions.

PMO-TC-1(B). EMERGENCY ORDER EXTENDING THE TIME FOR PAYMENT OF FINES, RESTITUTION, COURT FEES, AND REIMBURSEMENT OF COURT-APPOINTED COUNSEL FEES

In light of public health concerns arising from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), effective immediately, the due dates for payment of all fines, restitution, court fees, and reimbursement of court-appointed counsel fees shall be extended to May 4, 2020, or to the ordered due date in May 2020, whichever is later.

PMO-TC-1(C). ORDER REGARDING CHILD PROTECTION PROCEEDINGS

The Maine Judicial Branch continues to monitor the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The following procedures for child protection proceedings will apply, effective immediately, and until further order of the court:

1. The court will hold a summary preliminary hearing on a preliminary protection order as required by 22 M.R.S. § 4034(4). The court may waive the hearing on the preliminary protection order if the custodian consents, but the custodian's consent must be voluntarily and knowingly executed in court before a judge. (This could be conducted by video provided that video participation is sufficient to comport with due process requirements.)

2. The court will hold hearings on a jeopardy order petition within 120 days of the filing of the child protection proceeding. If the hearing is contested, the hearing will be held in-person at the court. (This could be conducted by video provided that video participation is sufficient to comport with due process requirements.) The court will consider requests to have witnesses testify telephonically on a witness-by-witness basis. If the hearing is uncontested and the parties plan to agree to jeopardy findings, the court will accept their agreement telephonically or by video. The AAG must send an email to the Clerk, copying all counsel and the GAL, indicating that the jeopardy order petition is uncontested and to arrange for the telephonic or video proceeding. The court, in its own discretion, reserves the right to require parties to appear in person.

3. The court will hold judicial reviews at least once every 6 months following the issuance of a jeopardy order. Contested judicial reviews will be held in-person at the court or by video or telephonically if available. The court may, in its discretion, elect to review the case in writing without a hearing, if the judicial review is not contested and the parties submit the agreed-to judicial review order in advance of the scheduled judicial review.

4. Hearings on petitions to terminate parental rights will be deferred until further order.

5. To the extent possible, the court will hold case management conferences and docket calls telephonically.

6. All child protective case filings will be accepted by email sent to the Clerk, copied to all counsel, and the GAL. Paper copies must also be sent to the court, all counsel, and the GAL. Clerks will provide email addresses to all parties.

PMO-TC-1(D). EMERGENCY ORDER SUSPENDING ALL MEDICAL MALPRACTICE PANEL PROCEEDINGS

In light of public health concerns arising from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), effective immediately, and until further order of the court, all medical malpractice panel proceedings are suspended, and all deadlines associated with medical malpractice panel proceedings are controlled by PMO-SJC-2.

PMO-TC-1(E). EMERGENCY ORDER VACATING WARRANTS FOR UNPAID FINES, UNPAID RESTITUTION, UNPAID COURT-APPOINTED COUNSEL FEES, AND OTHER CRIMINAL FEES

Effective immediately, any outstanding warrants for unpaid fines, unpaid restitution, unpaid court-appointed counsel fees, failure to appear for unpaid fine hearings, and any other failure to appear and pay other fees are hereby **VACATED**.

PMO-TC-1(F). EMERGENCY ORDER CONCERNING VIOLATIONS BUREAU CASES.

Effective March 17, 2020, all deadlines established pursuant to M.R. Civ. P. 80F (traffic infractions), and set to expire on or before May 1, 2020, are extended to May 29, 2020.

Dated: March 30, 2020

For the Superior Court:

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Robert Mullen
Chief Justice

For the District Court:

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Susan Sparaco
Chief Judge

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Jed French
Deputy Chief Judge