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PRESS RELEASE

Trial Court Service Centers Go Virtual

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Executive Office of the Trial Court

Massachusetts Court System

MEDIA CONTACT

Jennifer Donahue and Erika Gully-Santiago

Phone

(617) 557 - 1114 (tel:6175571114)

Online

PublicInfo@sjc.state.ma.us (mailto:PublicInfo@sjc.state.ma.us)

BOSTON, MA — Trial Court Chief Justice Paula M. Carey and Court Administrator Jonathan Williams today announced that Court Service Centers (CSCs) are now using videoconferencing technology to assist self-represented court users on matters including family law, housing and debt collection.

Court Service Centers normally offer assistance through in-person support in seven courthouses statewide, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, are currently closed to the public. Virtual Court Service Centers are able to provide legal information, help with court forms, and provide referrals to legal and community-based organizations on emergency matters, which include restraining orders, Section 35 commitments, and

emergency filings in Probate and Family Court and Housing Court, **among others** (/alerts/important-update-about-court-service-centers#1479076). Virtual Court Service Centers will be able to provide assistance on more matters as courts schedule more case types.

"Covid-19 has hindered the Trial Court's ability to provide in-person services to our most vulnerable court users," said Trial Court Chief Justice Carey. "We are pleased to offer Court Service Center services remotely in collaboration with court departments, legal aid organizations, academic institutions, lawyers and many community partners to provide access to justice across the Commonwealth."

“Virtual Court Service Centers are an invaluable resource for court users, especially those without legal representation who are in need of court services,” said Court Administrator Williams.

"The CSCs are vital to self-representing court users trying to complete court forms and navigate their way through a complicated legal system," said Co-Director of Support Services Sheriece M. Perry. "The CSC team has demonstrated their tremendous dedication and teamwork to make this new service option a reality.”

Court Service Centers operate a statewide videoconferencing connection, which can be accessed by videoconference or by phone. Court users who join a Court Service Center videoconference are admitted into a virtual waiting room and then into the virtual CSC. A staff person can answer general questions and then direct the participant into a designated breakout room for additional assistance. Breakout rooms are staffed with CSC employees, volunteers, and if available, legal aid clinics, to complete court forms and assist with filing of the forms via email. In accordance with a **Supreme Judicial Court Order** (/supreme-judicial-court-rules/supreme-judicial-court-updated-order-authorizing-use-of-electronic), CSC staff may sign and submit documents on behalf of court users who do not have access to technology at home, expanding access to justice.

The statewide virtual CSC is available Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The Trial Court currently uses the videoconferencing software offered by Zoom. CSC team members return calls and assist court users by appointment in the afternoon. More information about **virtual CSCs** (/alerts/important-update-about-court-service-centers#1479076) is available on the court system's website.

Court users can find information about other **remote court services** (/info-details/remote-court-services) on the court system's website. Contact information for local courts is available on the **Courthouse Locator page** (/courthouse-locator). Court users can also call the Trial Court Help Line with general questions about their cases and for help navigating the court system. The Help Line is staffed from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, and can be reached at 1-833-91COURT.

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