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Oahu District Courts Reopen

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HONOLULU – State District Courts on Oahu reopened on Monday, June 8. Kauikeaouli Hale (Honolulu District Court on Alakea St.), Kaneohe District Court, Ewa District Court, Wahiawa District Court, and Waianae District Court are now open to individuals with official court business, such as court proceedings, and business with the Traffic Violations Bureau and Legal Documents Branch.

"Access to the courthouse is limited to those with official court business to ensure social distancing and protect the health and safety of our court users and staff," said Melanie May, Deputy Chief Judge, District Court of the First Circuit.

Face coverings are required. If you have a fever, cough, or other respiratory symptoms; traveled in the past 14 days; or had prolonged contact with a person who has or is suspected to have COVID-19, you will not be allowed to enter the courthouse. Beginning June 16, the travel restriction will apply only to those who have traveled to Oahu from out of state.

The courthouses have implemented new measures to accommodate social distancing, including staging areas and queues to promote courthouse entry in an orderly fashion. Court users are encouraged to arrive extra early to allow enough time to park and, possibly, wait in line to get in. Areas to sit or stand are clearly marked.

The Honolulu District Courthouse has staff available in the front plaza area to help direct people to their destinations.

“Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the Honolulu District Court remained open for essential in-court proceedings, such as temporary restraining orders (TROs), felony cases, and criminal cases involving defendants currently in custody at the Honolulu Police Department, Oahu Community Correctional Center, and/or Hawaii State Hospital,” said Judge May. “These cases were heard daily, without interruption or postponement. We will continue to hear these cases, as our dockets expand to include other types of cases as well.”

Traffic infraction cases now being held remotely by Zoom videoconferencing or by phone
“We are now giving individuals in certain traffic infraction cases the option to participate remotely using Zoom videoconferencing or by phone,” Judge May said. “These options promote social distancing by reducing crowds, and are also more convenient for the public. Remote hearings eliminate the need for people to travel to court, find parking, stand in line, and wait in the courtroom. Individuals with remote hearings log or call in at a specified time and can address their cases from the comfort of their homes or offices.”

The court is contacting those individuals with cases for which remote hearings are available.

A **Remote Court Hearings web page (https://www.courts.state.hi.us/remote-court-hearings-via-zoom-or-webex)** has been launched to help those participating in a hearing in this manner. There are frequently asked questions, tips on participating remotely, and links to instructions on joining a hearing, and other helpful information.

Phasing in resumption of civil cases
“During June more civil cases will be heard, with more than 200 civil cases already set for hearing this month” said Judge May. “On June 8 we resumed most civil pretrial and settlement conferences, and on June 15 the regular claims answer calendar will be restart. Individuals with cases set for civil pretrial conferences or answer have the option to participate remotely using Zoom videoconferencing or by phone. Notices will be sent in cases in which remote hearings are available.”

For civil cases on the answer calendar, plaintiffs are not required to come to court on the answer date. However, plaintiffs must appear at all subsequent court dates. Defendants with cases on the answer must file a written answer or appear in court (either in person, through Zoom videoconferencing, or telephone).

Self-represented litigants (i.e., parties without attorneys) may submit written answers and other documents electronically through the **Court Document Drop-Off (https://www.courts.state.hi.us/legal_references/efiling)**.

Eviction cases to be addressed only in cases not covered by Governor Ige’s eviction moratorium
In accordance with Gov. David Ige‘s **Ninth Supplemenatry Proclamation Related to COVID-19 Emergency (https://governor.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2006097A-ATG_Ninth-Supplementary-Proclamation-COVID-19-distribution-signed.pdf)**, there will be no proceedings in cases “to terminate any tenancy for a residential dwelling unit, for failure to pay all or any portion or the rent, maintenance fees, utility charges, taxes or other fees required for residential dwelling unit.”

The court will hear only landlord/tenant cases that are not covered by Gov. Ige's proclamation. Landlord/tenant cases that are not covered by his proclamation will resume beginning June 22.

Parties with pending landlord/tenant cases are encouraged to mediate their disputes before their court dates.

Criminal cases
In June, the Honolulu District Court will continue to hear felony cases as well as criminal misdemeanor and petty misdemeanor cases involving defendants in custody at the Honolulu Police Department, Oahu Community Correctional Center, and Hawaii State Hospital. All other criminal cases are set for dates after June 30.

Judge May's **Third Amended Emergency Order Regarding the District Court of the First Circuit's Additional Response to the COVID-19 Outbreak (https://www.courts.state.hi.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Third-Amended-District-Court-Emergency-Order.pdf)** states:

Individuals with pending arraignment dates in criminal misdemeanor, criminal petty misdemeanor, traffic misdemeanor, and traffic petty misdemeanor cases who cannot afford to hire an attorney may contact the Office of the Public Defender for possible legal representation prior to their court dates. (OPD does not provide legal services in civil cases.)

Individuals will still need to go through a qualification process based on their financial situation to qualify for free services. Appointments are currently available by telephone only.

Hours: Monday through Friday, 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Telephone: (808) 586-2100

Free legal resources available in Oahu civil cases
Free legal help is available to self-represented litigants with civil district court cases on Oahu through the Honolulu Access to Justice Room, which is staffed by volunteer attorneys Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Please call 808-538-5629.

Free mediation services are available to all litigants with civil district court cases on Oahu. Mediation gives parties an opportunity to resolve their disputes without the time and expense associated with coming to court for hearings and trials. To schedule an in-person or online mediation, please contact the Mediation Center of the Pacific, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., at 808-521-6767.

"We are extremely grateful to our community partners, the mediators at the MCP, and the volunteer attorneys who have generously donated their time and expertise for the good of the community during the COVID-19 crisis. We would also like to thank the Hawaii State Bar Association for keeping the legal community informed, and for providing referrals to the growing number of people and businesses who need legal representation," expressed Judge May.

"The Judiciary wants to thank you for your patience and understanding as we cautiously reopen our buildings and make adjustments to service the community and provide a safe environment for all."

For more information, contact the Communications and Community Relations Office at 808-539-4909 or via email at **pao@courts.hawaii.gov (mailto:pao@courts.hawaii.gov)**.

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