**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
**March 23, 2020**

**Delaware Family Court details procedures during COVID-19 restrictions**

*Family Court will continue to handle emergency requests for Protection from Abuse Orders, emergency child welfare, custody, visitation, and guardianship matters, and limited adult criminal and juvenile delinquency matters*

With the recent orders by the Delaware Supreme Court closing most court facilities to the public and the Governor's order directing individuals to shelter in place, the Delaware Family Court has adopted a set of temporary, emergency procedures to allow litigants to continue to seek court help in urgent circumstances during this public health emergency. Family Court will continue to handle emergency and essential hearings. Specifically, Family Court will continue to address emergency requests for Protection from Abuse Orders and emergency child welfare, custody, visitation, and guardianship matters. Family Court also anticipates conducting limited adult criminal and juvenile delinquency matters. To the fullest extent possible, all necessary hearings will be held telephonically.

The Family Court has adopted Standing Order No. 2, related to filings during the COVID-19 State of Emergency and further posted an FAQ on its website to help guide litigants. In light of the courthouse closures, Family Court has adopted several measures to make it easier to file certain actions remotely. Family Court will be accepting emergency civil filings by email at FC_COVID19@delaware.gov. Emergency filings include:

- protection from abuse proceedings
- any filing related to a child welfare matter involving the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families
- custody/visitation/guardianship filings if filed on an emergency or priority basis (a motion and affidavit for emergency ex-parte order, Family Court Form 650, and affidavit for priority scheduling, Family Court Form 651, are available on the Family Court website at https://courts.delaware.gov/family/expeditedrelief/)

Family Court has also relaxed rules requiring notarized signatures and verifications. Litigants do not need to have documents notarized. Instead, a litigant can simply fill out and attach an Unsworn Declaration (Family Court Form 677) to any Family Court form requiring notarization. Family Court will also allow the use of "electronic signatures" which is simply typing "/s/" in front of your full legal name.

To get full details on these emergency measures and procedures, please visit the Family Court website where you can read the full text of the Standing Order No. 2 and the FAQ. (A direct link to the Standing Order is also here https://courts.delaware.gov/forms/download.aspx?id=120548 and a direct link to the FAQ is here https://courts.delaware.gov/forms/download.aspx?id=120538)

In accordance with paragraph 4 of the Supreme Court's Administrative Order No. 3, non-emergency civil filings may be mailed to the Family Court at the below addresses:

- Family Court – New Castle County Leonard L. Williams Justice Center 500 N. King Street Wilmington, DE 19801
- Family Court – Kent County 400 Court Street Dover, DE 19901
- Family Court – Sussex County 22 The Circle Georgetown, DE 19947

In addition, a "drop box" will be available in or near the lobby of the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center and at the Family Court Courthouse in both Kent County and Sussex County for any paper documents that are not able to be filed via email or by mail.

If you are mailing or dropping off a petition, please be sure to check the FAQ document for the schedule of costs associated with certain filing fees or to request to proceed In Forma Pauperis (Family Court Form 257) to have costs waived. Please also understand that there may be delays in Family Court receiving standard mail. For emergency filings, filings by email will be received and acted on more quickly. The FC_COVID19@delaware.gov mailbox will be checked by Family Court during business hours (8:30am to 4:30pm Monday through Friday). Self-represented litigants are reminded that forms and information are also available 24 hours a day on the Family Court website at https://courts.delaware.gov/family/.

**If you have any questions about an upcoming civil or criminal hearing in Family Court, please call the Family Court Call Center at 302-255-0300.**

**For the latest information on COVID-19, please visit the State of Delaware's informational website at: de.gov/coronavirus. If you have any questions, you can also contact the State's Department of Public Health Coronavirus call center by phone at 1-866-408-1899 or by email at DPHCall@delaware.gov.**