

## **DISTRICT COURT DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK**

**\*\*This information is current as of May 28, 2020\*\***

**In response to the spread of the coronavirus/COVID-19, the Court has issued “Standing Orders” outlining many changes to the court process. The information below is a summary of those changes. See here for the full [District Court order](#).**

**If you have questions about the District Court order and have experienced domestic violence, you may contact DOVE's Legal Helpline for assistance at (617) 770-4065 ext. 400.**

**The District Courts are closed for regular proceedings with some emergency exceptions until at least July 1, 2020. If you have questions, you may [contact the court](#).**

### **How do I know if my matter is considered an emergency exception?**

The court has determined that the following are considered emergency matters that will be held by video or telephone conference:

- New restraining orders and their 10-day hearings (see below for more details);
- New harassment prevention orders and their 10-day hearings (see below for more details);
- New emergency extreme risk protection orders and their 10-day hearings;
  - **NOTE:** If your emergency risk protection order is extended at your 10-day hearing, it can be extended for up to a year. The court will inform you if you need to appear for another hearing once the courts re-open to the public.
- Arraignments of new arrests in which the arrestee is in custody;
- Warrant removals for persons under arrest;
- Probation violations where detention is sought for persons arrested on a warrant or for a new crime;
- Search warrants;
- Mental health commitment hearings or evaluations pursuant to G.L. c. 123; and
- Mental health orders pursuant to G.L. c. 123, § 18(a).

### **What if I want to file for a 209A Abuse Prevention Order (Restraining Orders) or a 258E Harassment Prevention Order?**

If you are looking to file a new restraining order or harassment prevention order, please call DOVE's Legal Helpline for more information and advice. In general, these are considered an emergency and the court will hear your case. These matters are being heard via telephone or video conference. You can get more information about the process for filing a new restraining order or harassment prevention order while the courts are closed [here](#).

If you are scheduled for a 10-day hearing date for a restraining order or motion to vacate (the hearing that happens after the first “ex parte” hearing), your case will be heard via telephone or video conference. Please note, if your restraining order or harassment prevention order is

extended at this 10-day hearing, it may be extended for up to a year. The court will inform you if you need to appear for another hearing once the courts re-open to the public.

**What if I have a restraining order renewal hearing when the courts are closed?**

Any Restraining Orders (209A) or Harassment Prevention Orders (258E) that were scheduled to occur between May 28, 2020 and July 1, 2020, will either automatically be extended to a new date for a telephonic hearing **or** remain on their currently scheduled date but take place telephonically. You should receive information in the mail or by phone from the court about a rescheduled date and/or call-in information for a telephonic hearing. You may also call the court's emergency number: **1-833-91COURT**.

**What if my matter doesn't fall into any of these categories and is a non-emergency?**

All other case matters scheduled for a court event between May 28, 2020-July 1, 2020 will be heard upon motion or request. The court is also virtually hearing pre-trial criminal matters for persons in custody, including tenders of pleas and admissions;

The current Order does not prevent any court's consideration, at the discretion of a judge or clerk-magistrate, of other non-emergency matters that can be resolved virtually by videoconference, telephonic conference call, or other similar means.

Jury trials in both criminal and civil cases in state courts are postponed to a date no earlier than September 8, 2020. Civil bench trials are postponed until at least July 1, unless a judge determines that a bench trial may be conducted virtually. Criminal bench trials are postponed until at least July 1, unless the parties and judge agree that the trial may be conducted virtually.

**What if I have to pay a fine, fee, or other court cost because it is due between May 28, 2020-July 1, 2020?**

No fees, fines, or costs will be collected at a courthouse between May 28, 2020-July 1, 2020. You may pay your fee or fine online through the e-pay portal that is accessible at [www.masscourts.org](http://www.masscourts.org). If you are unable to pay such fee or fine through the e-pay portal, the requirement that such fee or fine be paid during that time frame is deferred until June 1, 2020 and Courts shall extend payment due dates to June 30, 2020. The deferment of such payment shall not operate to extend a person's probation.

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