



STATE OF ILLINOIS  
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF JUDGE**  
FOURTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

CHAMBERS OF  
**KIMBERLY G. KOESTER**  
CHIEF JUDGE

**Jaime S. Warren**  
Trial Court Administrator  
**Rebecca A. Schulte**  
Court Reporter Supervisor

COURTHOUSE  
221 SOUTH 7<sup>th</sup> STREET  
VANDALIA, IL 62471  
OFFICE: 618-283-2030  
FAX: 618-283-9741

**PRESS RELEASE**

Counties of:  
Christian, Clay, Clinton  
Effingham, Fayette, Jasper  
Marion, Montgomery, Shelby

March 13, 2020

Chief Judge Kimberly G. Koester and Clay County Resident Circuit Judge Joel J.C. Powless have announced that the Fourth Judicial Circuit, which includes Clay County, is open and will continue to monitor state and local responses to the coronavirus and will follow guidance provided by state and local public health agencies and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Out of an abundance of caution, the Chief Judge is directing that the following steps be taken to reduce temporarily the number of persons entering the courthouse during this period.

**Employees and Facility:**

All employees have been encouraged to wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands; stay home when sick; avoid close contact with people who are sick; and clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects.

Facility crews are conducting regular cleanings with an emphasis on first-touch areas such as doors knobs and areas inside elevators and restrooms.

**Jury Service:**

There is a plan in place to reduce the number of trials and number of jurors necessary for service. If you are summoned for jury duty and are experiencing any symptoms of any kind, including flu-like symptoms, have a fever or are coughing or sneezing, contact the Clay County Circuit Clerk's office on weekdays between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Your jury duty service will be deferred to a later date.

**Expansion of Remote Court Appearances:**

Attorneys or litigants that are unable to be present in courtrooms hearing civil and family matters (except Orders of Protections) may be able to appear remotely through use of conference calls with the court. To schedule said conferences, call the Circuit Clerk's Office in Clay County at (618) 665-3523.

Procedures are being explored to limit the number of inmates brought over to the courthouse. If possible, criminal cases with individuals that are in custody of the Clay County Sheriff may be handled through video conferencing and they may not be brought into the open courtroom.

The Effingham Area Problem Solving Court will be cancelled for a period of 14 days except to those individuals as directed by the Problem Solving Court Team. Staffing of Problem Solving Court will be conducted by video conferencing where available.

Clay County will continue to perform marriages in the courthouse during this time. However, we will allow only the couple being married to attend. Please do not bring additional people with you to the courthouse to attend your wedding.

**Adult and Juvenile Probation, Juvenile Detention:**

The Clay County Probation Department will remain open. A plan has been implemented to limit in-person contacts and suspension of certain large group meetings.

Certain treatment related group meetings may be cancelled without ramifications or may be relocated to larger areas to accommodate social distancing.

Probationers who are feeling sick or have had contact with someone who has the coronavirus should contact their probation officer. Probation clients should also contact their probation officer if they have any questions about their next appointment.

**State's Attorney Office and Public Defender Office:**

These offices will remain open but will be subject to the determination of the State's Attorney and the Public Defender regarding face-to-face appointments. Please call these offices if you wish to schedule appointments.

These are precautionary measures only. The health and welfare of all employees and courthouse users is our priority. As more information becomes available or if there are changes to court operations, we will advise.

Judge Joel J.C. Powless  
Resident Circuit Judge, Clay County