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**ORDER REGARDING EMERGENCY TEMPORARY MEASURES**

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The Vilas County Circuit Court is issuing this guideline to provide procedures and directions for proceedings and essential functions in the court during the next several weeks. **These guidelines are Emergency and Temporary Measures ONLY, effective from March 19, 2020 until April 28, 2020, or upon further Order of the Court.** The Vilas County courthouse remains open and any change in status will be noticed on the Vilas County website at <https://vilascountywi.gov> and the Wisconsin Court system website, <https://www.wicourt.gov>.

You should avoid coming to the courthouse unless necessary. Call 715-479-3632 if you have questions. The Clerk of Court's office will remain open with limited staffing. You are encouraged to file documents electronically or by mail. Payments to the court should be by check or money order; cash payment is discouraged.

The World Health Organization declared a global pandemic of COVID-19 due to widespread human infection worldwide. We are monitoring this situation and are committed to open access to our courts and service to the public, and to protect the health and safety of the litigants, court staff, attorneys, crime victims, jurors, and other participants in court proceedings, and all other persons in our courthouse facilities.

This guideline is in place to ensure the continuous performance of the court's essential functions and operations, and also to lessen the risk of public exposure. This guideline will incorporate use of videoconferencing and teleconferencing to minimize contact, when appropriate, and to follow social distancing practices.

1. **ILLNESS**

If you are sick or experiencing flu-like symptoms such as cough, fever or other respiratory problems, DO NOT COME TO THE COURTHOUSE. The courthouse security officers have authority to turn any person away and deny admission to the courtroom if a person is actively exhibiting symptoms of illness. They will, when necessary, take the name and contact information of the person and provide that information to the court to ensure that the court is aware the party attempted to appear. If you have a mandatory court appearance and cannot attend due to illness, please call the Judicial Assistant (715-479-3638) or the Clerk of Circuit Court (715-479-3632) to arrange for a telephone or videoconference appearance. The court will liberally grant continuances for court appearances during this period. PLEASE NOTE: If you have a criminal court appearance, you must call prior to the scheduled hearing. If you do not appear in court and fail to call, a warrant for your arrest will be issued. If you are in the courthouse, please maintain recommended social distancing from other persons (6 feet).

2. **THESE HEARINGS WILL CONTINUE AS NORMAL WITH APPEARANCES IN PERSON UNLESS OTHERWISE PERMITTED:**

Emergency Commitments

Preliminary Hearings without Waiver of Statutory Time Limits (Waivers of preliminary hearings may be conducted by phone or videoconference)

Termination of Parental Rights

Restraining Orders/Injunctions

3. **JURY TRIALS**

All jury trials are suspended until April 28, 2020.

4. **CRIMINAL CASES**

The intent of the court is to have as many hearings as possible conducted by phone or video means. Attorneys or unrepresented defendants should contact the judicial assistant at 715-479-

3638 or Clerk of Circuit Court at 715-479-3632 PRIOR to the court date to let the court know at what number the party can be reached. Counsel will be allowed to appear by telephone on behalf of their clients on all types of cases during this time period. Attorneys are encouraged to obtain and file written authorization to appear for clients charged with misdemeanor offenses.

Preliminary hearings, pleas and sentencing hearings are encouraged to be conducted by telephonic or video means if the defendant consents. The court will accept pleas on misdemeanors by authorization if the defendant so desires; the defense attorney will be permitted to appear telephonically or by video. If the defendant does not consent to the alternative means, the hearing may be adjourned unless time limits or other legal constraints demand otherwise. In that case, the court will determine on a case by case basis whether the hearing shall be conducted in person.

All pretrial conferences with the District Attorney shall be conducted by telephone. The defendant should not appear, but must be available by telephone. Any defendant that cannot be contacted by telephone at the time of the pretrial conference is subject to a warrant for non-appearance.

Unless specifically authorized by the court, all Orders to Produce for inmates housed in the Wisconsin Prison System are canceled until after April 28, 2020, or until further order of this court. No new Orders to Produce will be issued until after April 28, 2020.

##### **5. CHILD SUPPORT**

All child support hearings shall be conducted by telephone. If a payor is in custody on a commitment order, the appearance will be by videoconference.

6. **FAMILY LAW/DIVORCES**

Any scheduled hearings shall be conducted by phone unless the Judge or Family Court Commissioner requires a personal appearance. Unrepresented parties are required to call the judicial assistant at 715-479-3638 or the Clerk of Circuit Court at 715-479-3632 PRIOR to the court date to let the court know at what number the party can be reached. Requests to reschedule should be directed to 715-479-3638.

7. **JUVENILE**

Initial custody and plea hearings in any juvenile delinquency or juvenile in need of protection and services cases shall be conducted by video or telephone if a youth is housed in a detention or shelter facility or foster home. Parents and all other juveniles may appear by telephone in any case. Attorneys may appear by telephone. Dispositional hearings shall be in person unless the court determines otherwise or the juvenile and counsel so request. The court will find good cause if a decision is made to set any matter over.

8. **PROBATE AND GUARDIANSHIP MATTERS**

All probate hearings shall occur by phone. Unrepresented parties are required to call the Register in Probate (715-479-3642) PRIOR to the court date to let the court know at what number the party can be reached. Requests to reschedule should be directed to 715-479-3642. Hearings on guardianship matters will be generally suspended during the period of this guideline. (Transfer of patients from assisted care facilities, nursing homes or hospitals is not recommended at this time and guardians ad litem, and examining physicians or psychologists may not be permitted entrance to those facilities to conduct their investigations).

**9. SMALL CLAIMS**

There shall be no mandatory appearances for any cases.

Defendants may file a written Answer with the Clerk of Court's Office at or before the return date, and are encouraged to do so electronically or by mail. Mediations with the Court Commissioner shall be conducted by telephone.

For new small claims matters filed on or after March 18, 2020, the return dates shall be delayed to a date beyond May 15, 2020, unless the matter is an eviction.

All eviction matters that must be heard in a statutory time frame will be scheduled on a case by case basis. If personal appearances are required, the court will attempt to minimize contact by parties by ensuring proper distancing between parties and by requiring that the parties must file and pre-mark with the Clerk all evidentiary exhibits they intend to use at trial ahead of time at the Clerk's office. Requests to reschedule should be directed to 715-479-3638.

All writs of restitution in eviction actions shall be stayed for thirty days from the date of judgment of eviction.

**10. CIVIL CASES**

All scheduled hearings shall be conducted by phone. The parties are required to call 715-479-3638 or 715-479-3632 PRIOR to the court date to let the court know at what number the party can be reached. Requests to reschedule should be directed to 715-479-3638.

**11. OTHER MATTERS**

Cases will proceed as currently scheduled unless otherwise notified by the court. Please note that injunction hearings, criminal preliminary hearings, and mental commitment hearings should be presumed to be proceeding as originally scheduled UNLESS the parties have specifically

been informed otherwise by the court. Attorneys are encouraged to discuss the use of telephone or video conference appearances with clients and use these technologies to the extent possible.

For more information on any specific case, please call Judicial Assistant Kim McCallum at 715-479-3638 or the Vilas County Clerk of Circuit Court's Office at 715-479-3632.

This guideline is subject to further modification as conditions warrant.

Dated this 19<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neal A. Nielsen III", written over a horizontal line.

NEAL A. NIELSEN III  
VILAS COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE