

NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF GRANVILLE

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
DISTRICT COURT DIVISION
Civil Division

ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES REGARDING
THE EXPANSION OF GRANVILLE COUNTY JUVENILE
DELINQUENCY/UNDISCIPLINED COURTS, DOMESTIC COURTS, AND DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE/NO CONTACT COURTS

Acknowledging that social distancing and other safety measures will likely remain in effect at least in the short term after our Court System is allowed to expand its operations, the undersigned hereby establishes the following protocols and procedures regarding the expansion of Granville County Civil District Court.

I. CAPACITY AND SOCIAL DISTANCING

Courtroom audience seating should be determined in accordance with social distancing guidelines requiring each seat to be at least 6 feet apart from every other seat. Socially distanced audience seating shall be marked with numbered placards placed in numerical sequence. The placards or other type of signage used for seat marking should be approved by the County Manager and should be provided by the County. Audience members shall fill the seats in order beginning with seat 1 and continuing numerically through the last numbered seat.

Social distancing requirements shall also be enforced in the areas where persons are waiting to enter the Courtrooms and Courthouses. Floor line-up markings located at least six feet away from other such markings should be placed in hallways, entrance ways and other common areas where persons stand awaiting entry to the Courtroom. Additionally, depending on the particular Courthouse and premises, markings on floors or sidewalks should be made in at least six feet intervals outside and along the sidewalk up to the point of entry of the Courthouse. The total number of line-up marks both inside and outside the Courthouse should equal the number of audience available seats in the Courtroom.

Additionally, and if not already existing, County Maintenance staff shall have appropriate signage made that informs the public that entry in the Courthouse and the Courtroom is prohibited to persons having any of the current symptoms of the COVID-19 virus. Said signs shall include that all persons must wear protective masks or face coverings inside the Courthouse and Courtroom if the same are available. The signs shall contain a current list of all known COVID-19 symptoms and shall be prominently placed at the public entrance to the Courthouse and the District Courtroom.

II. COURT SESSIONS/TIME PERIODS/PROCEDURES

Granville County has three types of civil court sessions addressed in this order: split juvenile/domestic day, a full domestic day and domestic violence/no contact day. Each shall be addressed separately and all social distancing guidelines as set forth above shall apply.

Juvenile/Domestic Day

A split juvenile/domestic day shall have juvenile cases being heard from 9:30 until 10:30 a.m.. All juvenile cases shall be heard by priority of the case as outlined by Chief Justice Beasley's orders (i.e. secure custody hearings, probable cause, etc.).

All matters that can be held via Microsoft Teams or WebEx shall be heard using that method rather than in-person.

The court is aware that transportation may be an issue for juvenile cases and as such, all matters that can be held via Microsoft Teams or other electronic communication device. Attorneys shall be given the opportunity to speak with their clients confidentially before the hearing but are strongly encouraged to reach out to their clients BEFORE the hearing for ease and efficiency.

During the juvenile session, only juveniles, their parent/guardian, or victims shall be allowed in the courtroom. If witnesses are needed, they shall be summoned to the courtroom by the presiding Judge provided that social distancing can be maintained.

Only family groups shall be allowed to sit next to one another during all hearings.

Juvenile cases generally have many interested persons including the Juvenile, Juvenile Parents, Juvenile Attorneys, Juvenile Court Counselors, District Attorneys, Victims, Law Enforcement and Witnesses. Quite often, Juvenile Cases require discussion and negotiation before proceeding with admissions or contested hearings. District Attorneys and Juvenile Attorneys are strongly encouraged to communicate prior to Court sessions in order to lessen the time needed in Court to negotiate, etc. While such delays are occurring, the Court shall conclude as many Attorney involved divorces as possible. When a Juvenile matter is ready for hearing, the parties should let the Court know and the Court shall hold said hearing as soon as practical. After the conclusion of the last Juvenile matter, any remaining scheduled cases that will require minimal time will be heard.

Domestic Calendar – Split Juvenile/Domestic Day

Uncontested attorney divorces shall be heard from **10:45 a.m. until 11:00 a.m.**

The domestic calendar shall begin at **11:05 a.m.** All cases shall be assigned a time slot in which to appear. Pursuant to Justice Beasley's order, a thirty (30) minute time limit shall be placed on all matters on the calendar. The calendar will be prepared by the Presiding Judge and the Clerk after collaboration. The court calendar will be published at the front door of the courthouse, on

the door of the courtroom, as well as on the www.nccourts.org website. The Clerk shall also be responsible for providing the docket to as many interested litigants and attorneys as soon as possible as it is ready. To that end, the Clerk shall make best efforts to obtain and maintain current email addresses, cell phone numbers, mailing addresses and other contact information for non-represented litigants and for attorneys (See Exhibit 1 attached hereto and incorporated herein for an example of a form that Clerks may use in obtaining necessary information to send Judges' "schedules" to parties or attorneys).

Only Plaintiffs and Defendants are allowed in the courtroom during their time slot. NO OTHER WITNESSES or individuals providing moral support shall be allowed in the courtroom. Those individuals shall remain off the premises of the courthouse and can be summoned to the courthouse by the presiding judge, if necessary and if social distancing guidelines may be maintained. Courthouse security may use the Judge's "schedule" to determine those necessary parties.

After uncontested, attorney divorces, the schedule shall be as follows:

11:00 – 1:00 – six scheduled domestic cases shall be heard (attorney cases).

1:00 – 2:00 – Lunch break

2:00 – 4:00 – six scheduled domestic cases shall be heard (to include self-represented litigant divorces)

4:00 – 5:00 – administrative scheduling, hearing cases, etc.

Domestic Calendar with no Juvenile Docket

9:00 – 9:30 – uncontested attorney divorces.

9:30 – 11:00 – five scheduled domestic cases shall be heard (attorney cases).

11:00 – 1:00 – six scheduled domestic cases shall be heard (attorney cases).

1:00 – 2:00 – lunch break.

2:00 – 4:00 – six scheduled domestic cases shall be heard (to include self-represented litigant divorces).

4:00 – 5:00 – administrative scheduling, hearings, etc.

Domestic Violence/No Contact

9:30 – 11:00 - five scheduled cases shall be heard.

11:00 – 1:00 – six scheduled cases shall be heard.

1:00 – 2:30 – lunch break.

2:30 – 4:30 – six scheduled cases shall be heard.

4:30 – 5:00 – administrative scheduling, hearings, etc.

Any cases that cannot be reached or are not put on the calendar due to inability to hear the matter will be given a new court date and the parties shall be informed by the Granville County Clerk of Superior Court or their attorney of their new court date.

III. CASE PRIORITY

In determining which cases are to be heard, the court shall look to Justice Beasley's task force guidelines for guidance as to the priority of cases. According to the task force, the following are priority cases:

1. 50B – domestic violence
2. Temporary custody
3. Contempt related to child custody/visitation or child support
4. Post-separation support
5. Interim distribution
6. Divorce from bed and board
7. Permanent hearings on the following:
 - a. Equitable distribution
 - b. Alimony
 - c. Child custody
 - d. Child support

Any matters that can be heard without contest and with minimal parties being present should be mixed in with the priority cases, when necessary and approved by the presiding Judge (i.e. divorces, motions to withdraw, consent orders, etc.)

IV. ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS/HEARINGS

Nothing in this order excludes hearings via WebEx, or other electronic means of communication when deemed feasible or necessary to ensure the administration of justice.

V. COURTHOUSE SECURITY GUARDS (SOMETIMES NOTED AS COURTHOUSE SECURITY OR “SECURITY”):

Courthouse Security is an essential part of the adequate functioning and operation of the Criminal Courts subject to these guidelines as the Officers will provide information about the Court's operation and will control the inflow and outflow of persons into the Courthouse and the Courtroom. Judges should extensively consult with Courthouse Security regarding the protocols and procedures herein set forth. In addition to their existing work duties, Security will be responsible under these guidelines for the following:

1. maintaining social distancing requirements for persons lined up to enter the Courthouse and the Courtroom;
2. measuring temperatures of persons and asking questions about symptoms exhibited by any persons seeking entry into the Courthouse and Courtroom (NOTE: taking

temperature readings should occur only if Security has appropriate devices such as non-contact “gun” thermometers and Security deems it safe to do so);

3. preventing persons exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms from entering the Courthouse and Courtroom;

4. requiring persons who have protective masks or protective face coverings available to wear them at all times while in the Courthouse;

5. ensuring only parties and other essential persons enter the Courtroom during the appropriate Time Period for their cases, and, informing persons how to be seated once inside the Courtroom;

6. efficiently dispersing persons from the Courthouse when the Courtroom is full for any Time Period so as to minimize the number of persons in the Courthouse;

7. clearing the Courtroom at the end of each Time Period;

8. repeatedly relaying to the public clear instructions as to the operation of these requirements including who is allowed to be in Court during any Time Period contemplated, repeatedly explaining how persons should line-up, and directing the lining up of persons awaiting entry into the Courtroom and Courthouse.

For any Juvenile/Domestic Session of Court, the Clerk shall provide Courthouse Security copies of the Juvenile Docket, the Civil Issue Domestic Docket and the Judge’s “Schedule” of cases to be heard (**Exhibit 2** attached hereto is a sample of a “Judge’s Schedule”). From those, Security shall determine which persons are allowed entry into the Courtroom in any Time Period. Except as noted herein, only parties to cases set in a particular Time Period are allowed into that Time Period. To maintain confidentiality, Courthouse security shall ensure that the Juvenile Docket provided is not shown to anyone other than themselves and is returned promptly to the Clerk as soon as all Juvenile matters have been concluded for the session. Persons allowed entry in any periods of any Juvenile/Domestic session shall sit in the audience seating area at numbered seats. During any period of a session, and except as noted below, once all the available seats are taken in any period, no other persons are to be allowed into the Courtroom.

During any Time Period, Security shall make note when a person involved in a case set in said period has entered the Courtroom. If a party arrives after all audience seats are taken **and** a party/witness to the same case is already seated, Security shall let the late arrival into the Courtroom after a seat becomes available due as audience members exit. During any Time Period, if all audience seats are taken prior to the arrival of **any** parties or witnesses involved in a case set in said period, Security shall inform such persons that their cases will be continued and that they will receive notification from the Clerks as to their new court date. Additionally, Security should tell these persons to call the Clerk’s Office and ask to speak to a Domestic Clerk if they have not received notice of a new Court date within the next two weeks.

All persons approaching security who are parties to or interested in a case **not** on the list to be heard in the period underway shall be told to review the Case Schedule posted on the wall near security. After determining the right period, these persons shall be told to immediately leave the Courthouse and premises and not to return until immediately prior to the time provided for their hearing. Persons in the Courthouse not parties or witnesses to a case on the calendar and who do not have business with other agencies in the Courthouse shall be told to leave the Courthouse and premises.

VI. ATTORNEYS:

Attorneys will be representing many litigants in Granville County Juvenile/Domestic Violence/No Contact Court during the period of expanding operations. Attorneys often have to travel between several counties to meet their clients' needs. As a result, the time periods set out herein are likely to be burdensome for Attorneys needing to be in more than one place at a time. Attorneys should always try to arrange their personal schedules to be in Court in the appropriate time session as set by the session's Judge. When an Attorney cannot be in present in an assigned time period, the Attorney shall immediately notify the Clerk of that and may request that the matter be heard in a different time period. The Clerks shall promptly let the Judge know of the time conflict and together the Judge and Clerk will determine if a "new" period will be assigned for hearing. If a change of time period is possible, the Clerk shall promptly inform Courthouse Security of the period change so that Security can let the affected parties, witnesses and necessary persons into the "new" period. Upon a case being assigned a "new" Period, Security shall note the change on the "Schedule" available for public viewing. The Court shall make best efforts to ensure all parties have received proper notice of any period changes for cases.

Attorneys shall maintain close contact with clients to inform them of any change of Time Period for their cases. Opposing Counsel shall communicate regularly with each other regarding docketed cases and shall attempt to narrow issues to be decided by the Court during any necessary hearings. Time periods for Matters in which all parties are represented may be switched in the same manner as set out above. In addition, Attorneys should consider the possibility of using remote hearings outside of regularly held court sessions if, and when a Judge and Clerk can conduct such a hearing.

VII. COURTHOUSE/COURTROOM MAINTENANCE:

After each Time Period there will be a break of at least five minutes. During said breaks, the Courtroom shall be vacated by every person except Courthouse Maintenance Staff. These breaks are to allow maintenance to perform cleanings of the Courtroom as deemed appropriate by the Franklin County Health Director and/or appropriate Health directives.

VIII. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS:

A. All Judges, Attorneys, Clerks, Courthouse Security, Courthouse Maintenance Staff and others involved in the sessions designed by these guidelines should communicate freely and

regularly, both prior to and during sessions, to help the processes outlined herein move smoothly, efficiently and safely.

B. The time frames herein for beginning and ending Time Periods within any session of Court are provided for guidance. As no two Court dates are ever the same, on the day of any session conducted pursuant to these guidelines, the trial Judge has the discretion to modify said time frames, alter periods held, decrease the number of persons allowed in the Courtroom for any Period held, and take other safety measures the Judge deems appropriate for any session.

C. Any person seeking entry to the Courtroom who presents with a fever or any other symptom associated with COVID-19 shall be required to immediately leave the Courthouse premises and shall not return to the Courthouse for at least 72 hours.

D. The safety of all persons involved in the Court System is the of the upmost concern. The goal of this Order is to conduct effective and efficient Court sessions that completely dispose of as many cases as possible while maintaining the highest state of safety possible.

E. Notwithstanding anything contained herein to the contrary, as seats become available in the Courtroom during any Time Period, Courthouse security, upon request, shall allow members of the general public to enter the Courtroom and fill up to five seats; said members of the general public shall sit in numbered seats designated for the audience.

F. The undersigned reserves the right to modify the provisions herein as deemed necessary and appropriate for the safe and efficient administration of justice.

This Order being signed the ___ day of May, 2020 and being effective as of the beginning date for expansion of the Granville County Juvenile/Domestic/Domestic Violence/No Contact District Court's operations for the 9th Judicial District.

John W. Davis, Chief District Court Judge
9th Judicial District

J. Stultz, District Court Judge,
9th Judicial District

Caroline S. Burnette, District Court Judge,
9th Judicial District

<p>Ninth Judicial District</p> <p>Rev. 05/2020</p>	<p>REGISTRATION OF EMAIL ADDRESS FOR SELF REPRESENTED LITIGANT OR COUNSEL FOR LITIGANT</p>	
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IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF _____ COUNTY, N.C.

Plaintiff/Petitioner

Case No. _____

Vs.

Defendant/Respondent

**REGISTRATION OF
EMAIL ADDRESS FOR
SELF REPRESENTED LITIGANT OR
COUNSEL FOR LITIGANT**

I am currently representing myself or I am representing (circle one): Plaintiff/Petitioner or Defendant/Respondent before this court in the court case above. I request any documents be served upon me electronically, by way of the email address below, except for those that require specific service as directed by statute.

I understand that emailing documents to this email address is considered to meet legal notice requirements.

If I am self-represented I am responsible for notifying the court if I retain an attorney for this case.

I am responsible to notify the court if I change my email address or other contact information.

Signature Date: _____

Name (Print)

Street Address/P.O. Box

City/State/ZIP code

Phone

Email Address/Litigant

Email Address/Attorney

Exhibit 2 – Example Schedule

9:00 – 9:30a (uncontested divorces with an attorney)

15 CVD 980 Dean (Thompson) vs. Dean (Gulley)
20 CVD 453 James vs. James (Gardner)

9:30 – 11:00a

16 CVD 495 Humphries (Minshew) v. Shaw (Thompson)
19 CVD 334 Darnell vs. Dean (Hartsell)
20 CVD 114 Sumner (Bartlet) vs. Sumner(Rove)
20 CVD 678 Shaw(Jones) vs. Shaw
15 CVD 12 Journigan vs. Butler(Ashland)

11:00 – 1:00a

20 CVD 1 Sawyer vs. Sawyer
20 CVD 2 Tanner vs. Tanner
20 CVD 76 Wright vs. Wright
20 CVD 989 James vs. Hawkins
20 CVD 786 Scott vs. Harris
19 CVD 342 Burke vs. Burke

2:00 – 4:00p

20 CVD 111 Whittmore(Tully) vs. Whittmore(Peagram)
19 CVD 543 Dasani(Moore) vs. Dasani (Sutton)
20 CVD 332 Carpenter(Williams) vs. Corova
14 CVD 879 Roberts vs. Roberts(Thompson)
19 CVD 789 Horner vs. Horner