

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, ILLINOIS**

101 E. Main St.
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Anna M. Benjamin
Associate Judge
CourtroomJ@co.champaign.il.us

Randall B. Rosenbaum
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To: Attorneys and Self-Represented Litigants in Family and Guardianship Cases

Date: May 5, 2020

RE: TEMPORARY PROCEDURES FOR REMOTE HEARINGS

1. Pursuant to Sixth Judicial Circuit and Champaign County Administrative Orders, the Court has restricted operations to essential functions through May 29, 2020.
2. The Illinois Supreme Court entered Administrative Order M.R. 30370, authorizing non-essential court matters to be conducted remotely via telephone or video where possible.
3. Remote hearings of the following types only may be scheduled in family and guardianship cases formerly set for hearing but cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic:
 - a. Status hearings;
 - b. Case management conferences;
 - c. Pre-trial conferences;
 - d. Uncontested hearings in which the parties have reached a full agreement;
 - e. Additional hearing types may be added as the Court deems feasible.
4. NO contested evidentiary hearings will be held remotely at this time.
5. To request a remote hearing:
 - a. Send an email to the Court Clerk at CourtroomG@co.champaign.il.us for hearings in Courtroom G, or to CourtroomJ@co.champaign.il.us for hearings in Courtroom J, identifying the following information:
 - i. Case Number;
 - ii. Names, Email Addresses, and Phone Numbers of all Parties & Attorneys;
 - iii. Cancelled Hearing Date and Time;
 - iv. Type of Hearing Requested;
 - v. Whether an Interpreter is requested and, if so, the language requested;
 - b. Copy opposing parties and attorneys on the email to the Court Clerk;
 - c. Do not send any additional information in the email – the accounts are monitored by multiple users, and it will be made part of the public record;
 - d. Observers requesting access may also email the Court Clerk for instructions;
 - e. Emails not complying with these procedures may not receive a timely response.

6. Remote hearings will be conducted by Zoom video or telephone conference, as follows:
 - a. The Court Clerk will coordinate the remote hearing date with the parties;
 - b. If a party does not have an email address or the ability to join by video, the party shall provide a telephone number to join the meeting via telephone; and
 - c. The Court Clerk will send an email invitation with the hearing date, time, the meeting identification number and password, and a link to participate, at least one day in advance of the remote hearing;
 - d. Instructions to access Zoom will be provided to the participants with the notice.
7. The Court will attempt to accommodate as many requests as possible during the month of May, or until the Courthouse has reopened, depending on staff availability due to social distancing requirements.
8. The remote hearing is an extension of the Court and the same rules regarding dress codes, demeanor, language, and respect apply.
9. **ADDITIONAL RULES REGARDING REMOTE HEARINGS:**
 - a. The court proceedings are recorded by audio in the same manner as in-person hearings; all conversations can be heard by all of the other parties present and will become a part of the court record. A transcript may be requested of any hearing conducted via Zoom, through the Champaign County Court Reporters.
 - b. Except as otherwise provided, hearings held remotely shall be conducted to the same standards as hearings in a courtroom and in accordance with the Illinois Rules of Civil Procedure, Illinois Supreme Court Rules and the Rules of Practice of the Circuit Court, Sixth Judicial Circuit.
 - c. This is a formal proceeding and participants must treat it as if they are present in the courtroom. Any inappropriate language, interruptions, material or behavior may lead to the participant being muted, having his or her video disabled, being removed from the proceeding or not being able to engage in remote hearings in the future.
 - d. All participants in the virtual proceeding should have a simple, non-distracting background displayed.
 - e. There are multiple participants in the proceeding. If you are not speaking, please mute yourself so we do not pick up background noise or unwanted audio feedback. Clicking the microphone will enable you to mute and unmute.
 - f. When you want to speak, unmute yourself and identify yourself by stating your last name. Identify yourself each time, otherwise, the Court Reporter may have a difficult time determining who is speaking if a transcript is requested. If you have an objection, state the objection followed by your name or other identifying title. Wait until questions are completed before announcing an objection. The Court may interrupt from time to time to clarify who is speaking.
 - g. When you speak, please make sure that you speak slowly and clearly. Please do not speak over one another or interrupt one another.

- h. The Court will admit participants into the virtual Courtroom from the Waiting Room. Participants may request to confer with their attorney in a private Break Out Room; however, no private or group chat will be permitted.
- i. No communication with a testifying witness is allowed, through any format, during the proceeding. The testifying witness may be examined regarding the identity of all persons in the room with the testifying witness. Witnesses may not hold or refer to any notes, paperwork or other information via electronic devices while they are testifying.
- j. A witness may testify by videoconference only, not by telephone, except as otherwise ordered by the Court.
- k. Verbal responses are essential in order for the Court Reporter to take down what the speaker said if a transcript is requested. No video will be recorded in any manner.
- l. Video or audio recording of this proceeding by any party through any device or format is strictly prohibited. Failure to comply with this admonishment may result in the imposition of sanctions or in a finding of contempt.
- m. Proposed Orders and Judgments may continue to be submitted to the Court through the e-filing system.

May 5, 2020
Date

Anna M. Benjamin
Judge Anna Benjamin

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