

# P R E S S   R E L E A S E

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SUPERIOR COURT IN YAVAPAI COUNTY

Hon. Celé Hancock

Presiding Domestic Relations Judge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 30, 2020

## **FAMILY LAW MATTERS IN YAVAPAI COUNTY**

**\*\*\*UPDATED\*\*\***

The Superior Court in Yavapai County will continue to follow the essential services model through the month of May. However, we remain optimistic that we will be able to resume full-time court calendars prior to the conclusion of the month. As we receive additional information and recommendations from health officials, we will evaluate the need to implement a recovery plan to establish guidelines necessary to resume business while considering the safety of the community and court staff as the highest priority.

While the Courts remain open to address family law cases, the Domestic Relations Judges of the Yavapai County Superior urge parties of family law cases to be a part of the solution. We recognize that school closures, economic issues, and fear have placed an increased strain on an already difficult situation. Even during this difficult time, longstanding principles of **communication** and **kindness** to one another are the best tools everyone has to solve disputes. We urge everyone to keep their children's best interest in mind as you communicate with each other regarding the problems you are all experiencing. Any agreements reached can be temporary to get through this health emergency or permanent. The Judges remain available to consider those agreements which can be electronically filed through the email addresses set forth at the end of this announcement. If you are unable to obtain an agreement on part or all the disputes you may have, the following information is intended to help you navigate the family law court process at this time.

Consistent with the Administrative Orders of the Arizona Supreme Court and the Yavapai County Superior Court, the Family Law Judges of the Yavapai Superior Court continue to put forth best efforts to meet the needs of the community we serve while also being mindful of issues and recommendations relating to the COVID-19 concerns.

Effective April 1, 2020, the following summarizes the present policies and procedures of the Family Law Divisions of the Yavapai County Superior Court:

All court proceedings scheduled before a judicial officer shall proceed as directed by the assigned judicial officer. When possible, in-court proceedings are being replaced with telephonic proceedings. If you are experiencing symptoms of illness or have been in contact with someone experiencing these symptoms, do NOT come to the courthouse. Contact your assigned division and alternate arrangements will be made.

## **ESSENTIAL HEARINGS**

Orders of Protection, Injunctions Against Harassment, Injunctions Against Workplace Harassment, Expedited and Emergency Petitions for Temporary Orders and the hearings that follow are essential and will continue to be conducted. The assigned judicial officer will determine whether these hearings will take place in person or telephonically. If you have concerns regarding COVID-19, please call the assigned division immediately to express your concerns or file an appropriate motion with the Clerk of the Superior Court.

We understand that families are under enormous pressure during this time. We ask that you make every effort to follow your current parenting plan to the best of your ability. If you **have not** been following the last parenting plan in your case and are having issues or disputes regarding parenting time, please keep in mind that most parenting plans require you to follow the original parenting plan until further order of the Court.

While schools are closed, parenting time should continue as if the children are still attending school under the school calendar of the relevant district. The closure of the school for public health purposes will not be considered an extension of any break/holiday/vacation period or weekend. 'Spring break,' 'summer break/vacation,' 'fall break,' and other designated breaks/holidays/vacation mean the regularly calendared breaks/holidays/vacations in the school district where the children are attending school (or would attend school if they were school-aged). Parents should follow their parenting plan for breaks/holidays and vacations.

Please be kind to each other and your children. The stress of being at home all day with children and the possibility or reality of a reduction in employment may cause uncommon stress on everyone. Arizona law requires that you wait at least one year prior to returning to Court to modify your parenting plan unless certain factors exist pursuant to A.R.S. §25-411. The Courts remain open to assist **if necessary, but we urge you to first attempt to work out the issues yourselves. The best way to resolve conflict is to compromise while keeping your child or children's best interest in mind.**

## **PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM**

The Parent Education Program is limited to an on-line class through June 1, 2020, unless otherwise dictated by Administrative Order. The Alternative Dispute Resolution Department (ADR) will be reaching out to parties to inform them of this change and how to access the online class. If the Court does not have a current email or phone number, the parent's notice of the change to on-line parent education program will be mailed. If you are an attorney, please assist your client in updating their contact information with the Clerk of the Court including a current phone number and an **e-mail address**.

## **MEDIATION**

Mediation and all other conciliation services may be conducted by telephone or by videoconferencing. These matters are being addressed on a case by case basis. The ADR Department is contacting parties directly if there is a change in how your case will be conducted. If you have a concern about appearing in person for a scheduled mediation, please contact the ADR Department at 928-777-3066.

If you are an attorney and will be attending parenting mediation by telephone or videoconferencing, you and your client **must be in the same location**.

## **RESOLUTION MANAGEMENT/STATUS/RETURN HEARINGS**

Resolution Management Conferences, Status Conferences and Return Hearings will be conducted telephonically. If an agreement is reached the judicial officer will enter the agreement on the record in accordance with Rule 69, ARFLP. If documents are required to be filed pursuant to the agreement, the parties should exchange documents electronically until finalized and approved. One party should electronically file it with the Clerk at the email address provided below. The Court may also swear the parties in, reduce the agreement to writing and sign the agreement, making it a permanent order of the Court. If no agreement or only a partial agreement is reached, the remaining issues shall be set for further proceeding.

## **CHILD SUPPORT HEARINGS**

Child support hearings will be conducted telephonically, unless otherwise ordered by the Court. Child Support Enforcement proceedings may be held in person or telephonically. The assigned judicial officer will decide these on a case by case basis and will advise the litigants by telephone and/or email.

If you have any questions or concerns about an upcoming court appearance, contact the assigned Division directly.

Division 4 – The Honorable Krista M. Carman - 928-771-3303

Division 5 – The Honorable Celé Hancock - 928-771-3307

Division FLC – The Honorable Joseph P. Goldstein - 928-771-3480

Division PTA – The Honorable Debra R. Phelan - 928-567-7722

To electronically file documents with the Clerk of the Court, you may use the following email addresses; however, if there is a filing fee required the document will not be accepted for filing until the filing fee has been paid or the Court issues an Order Deferring or Waiving Fees.

Cases assigned to the Verde Valley Judicial District:

*COSCe-mailsubmissions-Verde@courts.az.gov*

Cases assigned to the Prescott Judicial District:

*COSCe-mailsubmissions-Prescott@courts.az.gov*

Juvenile cases including Juvenile Delinquency (JV), Juvenile Dependency (JD) and Severance of Parental Rights (SV):

*COSCemailsubmissions-JVJDSV@courts.az.gov*

THE FORMS FOR A DEFERRAL OR WAIVER OF COURT FEES CAN BE LOCATED ON LINE AT THE FOLLOWING CLERK OF COURT WEBSITE:

<http://courts.yavapai.us/selfservicecenter/>