

Message Regarding Remote Family Pretrials and Status Conferences
from Honorable Michael A. Albis, Chief Administrative Judge
Please Do Not File Motions for Continuance

In preparation for an increased level of operations during the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Family Division is scheduling pretrials and status conferences with the intention of reviewing every pending family matter. The purposes of the conferences are to discuss settlement where possible, and to enable the court to understand the status of each case and gather information for scheduling purposes if settlement cannot be reached. The conference in a case where both parties have attorneys is scheduled through a notice to counsel, followed by an email invitation to a remote conference with a judge that may be accessed by internet link or telephone.

Participation in the conference is necessary regardless of whether a case has already been pretried or previously scheduled for a hearing or trial. Given the court's current staffing and the number of conferences to be scheduled, it is not possible to consult with both sides in advance as to the date and time of each conference. We realize that the advance notice you receive may be shorter than normal. However, we are scheduling the conferences in a manner that allows for participation from home or office, with a minimum time imposition, during a period when other court commitments are limited. We ask that everyone be as accommodating as possible in order to help us determine the status of cases, so that when the scheduling of hearings and trials on a more normal basis becomes possible we will be ready to use everyone's time efficiently.

We recognize that you may have unavoidable conflicts at the scheduled times. When this happens, please follow the instructions in your notice of the conference from the court, and notify by email the individual from whom you received the notice so that an alternative date may be assigned. When you receive your notice that a conference has been scheduled, please reply by email as soon as possible. If the court does not hear from the parties within a reasonable time, the time slot may be given to another case. **Please do not file a motion for continuance.** Filing such a motion is not necessary, encouraged, or helpful. It only creates more work for court staff and delays the rescheduling of your conference.

Finally, it is not an option to report to the court that the parties wish to forego the noticed conference and obtain trial or hearing dates instead. Even if the parties do not believe there is a need for a status conference or pretrial, the court needs one for scheduling purposes. In our new public health climate it will be more important than ever for the court to know when cases will be ready to be heard and to have a realistic estimate of the length of the proceedings. No future trial or hearing dates will be assigned to a case unless a pretrial or status conference under this program is held first.

Thank you.