IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF TENNESSEE
FOR THE THIRTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT AT MEMPHIS

IN RE: COVID-19 PANDEMIC SHELBY COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT

PHASE I PLAN FOR RESUMING IN-COURT PROCEEDINGS

In coordination with the Sheriff's Department, the Circuit Court will work with Chancery, Probate, and General Sessions to coordinate in-person court proceedings, staggering cases and staggering witnesses to ensure the Court can safely accommodate the number of people appearing in the courthouse/courtroom on any given case or day.

Outside and throughout the courthouse, the Court will display signs informing individuals they must wear nose/mouth coverings and stay at least six feet apart.

All individuals, including security guards, court personnel, deputies, law clerks, and judges will be required to use nose/mouth covering and practice physical distancing at all times while in the courthouse, courtroom, and while waiting to enter the courthouse.

Sanitizer or wipes will be available for individuals at the entrance of the courthouse and near each courtroom.

Areas of entry into the courthouse, court facilities, elevators, and other areas used by the public and courthouse staff will be sanitized at intervals during the hours of operation and at the end of each day.

The Court will have a plan for each courtroom to be sanitized at regular intervals during the day depending on the nature of the docket, including wiping down areas used by members of the public, courtroom personnel, witnesses, attorneys, and litigants.

The Circuit Court will conduct the following in-person court proceedings:

- Allegations of abuse, including but not limited to orders of protection and emergency child custody orders;
- DCS emergency matters related to child protection;
- Certain temporary injunctive relief;
- Emergency protection of elderly and other vulnerable persons;

- COVID-19 public health emergencies;
- Other proceedings that can be conducted safely in accordance with COVID-19 precautions as agreed to by the judge, attorneys, and the parties.

All in-person proceedings will be conducted implementing physical distancing for all participants both inside and outside the courtroom with spaces marked off by tape at least six-feet apart. Not including court personnel, no more than ten (10) persons at a time will be allowed in a courtroom.

Judges will attempt to reduce the number of in-person proceedings by utilizing audio or video conferencing to resolve matters without the need for in-person hearings.

Motions may be considered on brief without oral argument, telephonically, or via Zoom, depending on the Division preferences.

Depending on the Division preferences, uncontested divorces on grounds of irreconcilable differences or on default judgments may be conducted via Zoom or on the affidavit/interrogatories of the Plaintiff/witnesses.

All other proceedings including, but not limited to, bench trials (domestic and non-domestic), minor settlements, and writs of inquiry may be conducted via Zoom, at the judge's discretion.

The Court will allow in-person appearances only if the Court can implement physical distancing of all parties, lawyers, and witnesses. If Zoom or an in-person court hearing is not feasible for any reason, the hearing will be reset.

Status conferences may be conducted telephonically, via Zoom, or by written report.

All jury trials scheduled from May 4, 2020, through July 3, 2020, will be reset.

Attorneys and self-represented litigants will be allowed to submit proposed orders via email or by placing them in the Division's box. All approved orders will be signed and entered promptly. The Court will ask that email addresses be included on the signature lines of orders so that attested copies can be emailed. Otherwise, attested copies will be mailed by regular U.S. mail or placed in the Division's box.

Attorneys and self- represented litigants will be reminded to check the Circuit Court website for each Division's COVID-19 preferences.

The Circuit Court Clerk's office will be open and available for in-person court filings, attested/certified copies, disbursements and other general business during business hours set by

the Circuit Court Clerk. As always, pleadings will be accepted electronically via the 24- hour online electronic filing system. In addition, a drop box will be available and will be checked regularly during normal business hours.

Signed this 5 day of May, 2020, on behalf of the Shelby County Circuit Court Judges.

Mary L. Wagner
Judge of Division VII