



Supreme Court of Illinois

May 20, 2020

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT ISSUES GUIDELINES FOR RESUMING JUDICIAL BRANCH OPERATIONS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Illinois Supreme Court today issued an [order](#) and [operational guidelines](#) to help courts statewide resume in-person operations and establish procedures for remote hearings. Since mid-March, the state's courts have been operating under precautionary measures to minimize the spread of COVID-19 while continuing to conduct emergency and essential matters.

This order is effective June 1 and modifies the Court's March 17, 2020 order so that each circuit may return to hearing all court matters either in-person or remotely according to a schedule adopted for each county by the chief circuit judge. Remote hearings, which have proven to be successful nationwide, will play a large role in reducing the numbers of people appearing at courthouses and ensuring the safety of court users, staff and judicial officers.

"Our courts around the state have risen to this enormous challenge to continue the Judicial Branch mission to protect the rights and liberties of all by providing equal access to justice, resolving disputes, and upholding the rule of law," Chief Justice Anne M. Burke said. "The Court realizes that the health crisis is not over, but we must advance justice in a safe and organized manner."

The guidelines recognize that each jurisdiction is uniquely positioned to address COVID-19 challenges based on local conditions. As noted in the Supreme Court's May 20, 2020 order, chief circuit judges are authorized to develop plans for resumption of court operations in the circuits. Plans may differ from county to county, but local plans are to continue the use of remote hearings where appropriate. For jurisdictions without the resources to take advantage of these efficiencies, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts is exploring options for enhanced support of video conference technology. Multiple trainings on remote hearings have been conducted and more will follow through the Illinois Judicial College and bar associations.

The factors which chief judges may consider in determining whether matters may be safely heard include: deadlines which apply to a case or class of cases; the length of time any applicable deadline has been suspended by order of the Supreme Court or the Circuit Court; information from public health authorities; limitations in court facilities or staffing; and anticipated prejudice to any class of cases as a result of continued delay. Chief judges should understand that local conditions may change, and their plans should contain contingencies in that event.