



MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

More Michigan Courts Go Virtual

Supreme Court Allows More Remote Hearings, Provides Guide for Courts

LANSING, MI, April 7, 2020 –The Michigan Supreme Court today took comprehensive steps to allow Michigan courts to conduct additional remote proceedings in order to prevent the spread of coronavirus. These steps build on a series of emergency measures already implemented to mitigate transmission and protect the public and court staff. The key element of today’s action is [Administrative Order 2020-6](#), which provides expanded authority to judges to conduct proceedings remotely.

“Michigan’s judiciary is moving forward at light speed to make sure that virtual court proceedings are just as accessible, efficient, and transparent as traditional proceedings,” said Chief Justice Bridget M. McCormack. “With the technological tools and the support, courts can protect public safety and constitutional rights and also prevent the spread of COVID-19.”

Today, the State Court Administrative Office also released “[Michigan Trial Courts Virtual Courtroom Standards and Guidelines](#).” The detailed document covers key concepts to help courts manage remote proceedings and addresses conditions set by [AO 2020-6](#), including:

- Making sure remote proceedings are consistent with the party’s Constitutional rights;
- Ensuring litigants and their lawyers can communicate confidentially;
- Providing public access during the proceeding or immediately after by video recording, unless the proceeding is closed or limited by court rule or statute;
- Sufficient recording of the proceeding to produce a verbatim written transcript.

The [document](#) also provides guidance to courts to prevent participation or disruption by nonlitigants, giving notice to the public of virtual hearings, and troubleshooting potential technical problems. The manual was informed by the hard work of the [Virtual Courtroom Task Force](#), which included 25 judges, court administrators, court clerks, and county officials. Chaired by Macomb County Circuit Judge Kathryn Viviano, the group solicited ideas from courts statewide and collected more than 100 submissions.

The Court also released “[Courts and COVID-19 – Building Capacity](#)” a step-by-step checklist to help courts build capacity for an eventual return to full operations. The list includes information to consider when establishing plans for the future, while maintaining essential functions and expanding use of remote proceedings. Last week, the State Court Administrative Office provided courts with detailed technical instructions in the [Virtual Court Resource Center](#), including a series of webinars, on remote proceedings.

The Michigan Supreme Court announced on Monday that for first time oral arguments would be held via Zoom on both April 15 and April 22, 2020. The arguments will be streamed on the Court’s [YouTube page](#).

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