



*State of South Carolina*  
*The Family Court of the First Judicial Circuit*

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March 25, 2020

**Calhoun, Dorchester and Orangeburg Family Court Bar**

RE: Family Court Hearings

Dear Members of the Bar:

As you are likely now aware, the family courts in the First Judicial Circuit are unable to conduct business as usual. Pursuant to an Order of Chief Justice Beatty, family court will be holding emergency hearings only through May 1, 2020. A copy of his March 18, 2020, Order is attached to this email.

Our resident judges are working in our offices during this time. We have collectively agreed to request that you continue to send in consent orders which will resolve scheduled hearings which have been canceled or matters which have not yet been scheduled on the docket. Proposed consent orders approving agreements (signed by the parties and/or their attorneys), both temporary and final, will be considered by our resident judges when they are accompanied by duly executed affidavits in lieu of appearance(s) and financial declarations from all parties. We obviously cannot grant final divorces in this manner, and those hearings will have to be scheduled after the current order of the Chief Justice is lifted. It is our hope that consideration of consent orders in this fashion will mitigate the potential backlog of scheduling when family court operations return to normal. We ask that you send proposed consent orders and accompanying documents to the Clerk of Court's office in the appropriate county for filing so that all documents may be clocked and the appropriate court file pulled prior to our consideration. All of the Clerk of Court offices in our circuit have arrangements in place for filing documents.

Additionally, the Chief Justice issued an Order on March 19, 2020, regarding attendance at mediation conferences by video conferencing. A copy of this Order is attached to this email. As the chief administrative judge for the first judicial circuit, I am authorizing parties to appear at mediation conferences by video conferencing.

Finally, we have been advised by the Chief Justice that family court cases which are subject to be dismissed pursuant to the 365 Day Rule are to be extended for an additional ninety (90) days. No action may be dismissed in applicable cases until ninety (90) days after the 365 days have lapsed. There will be no need to file a Motion to Extend 365 in cases to which this will apply.

Sincerely,

Anne Guè Jones  
Chief Administrative Judge