

17<sup>th</sup> JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT

EUGENE G. DOHERTY  
CHIEF JUDGE



WINNEBAGO COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
400 WEST STATE STREET - ROOM 215  
ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS 61101  
PHONE 815-319-4800

## PRESS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **COURT PAUSES CIVIL AND FAMILY CASES, PLANS TO REDUCE CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE CASES**

Chief Judge Eugene Doherty announced today the Circuit Court's plan to continue essential court operations while responding to the public health risk presented by the COVID-19 coronavirus. The following changes in procedure are effective Tuesday, March 17, thru Tuesday, March 31, 2020, in both Winnebago County and Boone County:

**Filing:** The Clerk's office remains available for filing new matters.

**Jury Trials:** Jurors will be still be needed, but far fewer of them will be summoned:

- The Court is cancelling and rescheduling all civil cases set for jury trial through the end of March.
- The Court will conduct jury trials in criminal cases only where time constraints require it.
- Grand jurors may still be called in, but the Court is working on ways to minimize their schedule.

**Orders of Protection:**

- All pending hearings on orders of protection and stalking/no contact petitions will proceed as scheduled.
- New petitions may still be filed, and the Court will make an online option to request an emergency order of protection (including a telephone hearing with the judge).

**Civil, Family and Divorce Cases:**

- All pending civil, family and divorce cases will be continued and eventually given notification of a new court date.
- The Court will still entertain *emergency* parenting/custody matters.

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**Criminal and Juvenile Cases:**

- *Unless you are otherwise notified*, criminal and juvenile cases will proceed as scheduled. Some cases will be rescheduled and individual parties will be notified if that occurs.
- When possible, subsequent court hearings will be reset to dates falling later than usual.

**Traffic:**

- Unless you receive a notice to the contrary, your traffic court date will proceed as scheduled. The Court will utilize additional space to ensure appropriate personal separation of court patrons.

“We are committed to both public health and public safety,” said Chief Judge Doherty. “The measures we are taking today represent our considered judgment about how we can best accommodate both goals under the current circumstances. We will use the next two weeks to assess our approach. It seems likely that some version of these approaches will continue past March 31, but we are proceeding with these measures now because the situation demands it.”

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