

FILED
BLAIR COUNTY
ROBIN G. PATTON

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS, BLAIR COUNTY
24TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

2020 APR -8 PM 3:00

PROTHONOTARY
CLERK OF COURTS
CLERK OF ORPHANS COURT

IN RE: 24TH Judicial District –

DECLARATION OF JUDICIAL EMERGENCY

Supreme Court:
No. 20 WM 2020
Blair County No.:
No. 2020 MD 0003

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

CLARIFYING ORDER REGARDING CUSTODY EXCHANGES

AND NOW, this 8th day of April, 2020, pursuant to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's Orders of March 18, 2020, and April 1, 2020 and the individual Judicial Emergency declared in Blair County by President Judge Elizabeth A. Doyle, the court hereby **ORDERS, DIRECTS** and **DECREES** as follows:

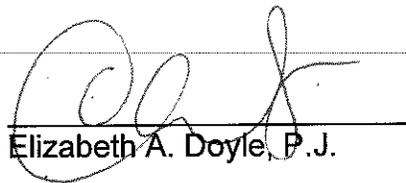
1. On March 23, 2020, after being contacted by members of the family Bar of Blair County with a request for an Order about custody matters to provide certainty and safety for all custody litigants in the context of the COVID-19 emergency, the Court entered an Order first addressing custody matters in the situation that existed as of March 23, 2020, and secondly addressing what would go into effect if the Governor or any other executive branch entity ordered citizens of Pennsylvania to "shelter-in-place" or "stay-at-home."¹

¹ In our March 23, 2020 order we used the language "shelter-in-place" and the Governor has used the language "stay-at-home." For the purpose of custody exchanges in the 24th Judicial District they are synonymous. The court could not foretell what language the governor would use and at the time of the March 23, 2020 order the prevailing language for such an order was "shelter-in-place."

2. On April 1, 2020 Governor Wolf did indeed order citizens to “stay-at-home.”
3. In the portion of its March 23 Order addressing the stay at home, the Court endeavored to provide certainty to parents and children and, for safety of all, to limit the person-to-person contact and family to family spread involved in custody exchange situations in this medical emergency. Some custody exchanges involve transferring children across counties in Pennsylvania, in and out of counties very much affected by the COVID-19 medical emergency.
4. At this time, at the request of the family law bar for clarification, we acknowledge that our March 23, 2020 order is subject to modification by parents/parties after they mutually discuss and agree and assure each other that they:
 - a. Understand the risk of COVID-19 infection and illness involved in custody exchanges;
 - b. Have taken steps to insure that their children, themselves, and all family members will stay safe and disease-free;
 - c. Will practice social distancing during custody exchanges; and
 - d. Will take personal responsibility for any consequences of effecting a custody exchange.

5. We reiterate that in all cases parents shall strive to come to agreements about their children, based on the terms of their prior Orders, or in the case of parties who have not yet achieved a custody order, based on communication between them, and that whenever parents have custody of children they shall provide communication between the child(ren) and the party out of custody by any remote or advanced communication method, such as, but not limited to, telephone, text, video, email, regular mail, and/or social media communication.
6. We make explicit that all avenues of custody special relief remain open to litigants; and that petitions for special relief shall be heard.
7. This Order is subject to modification or rescission if the Federal, state, or local government, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, or the Secretary of Health promulgate new regulations or guidance. This Order shall terminate on April 30, 2020, the stated end of the Governor's "stay at home order" of April 1, 2020.

BY THE COURT:



Elizabeth A. Doyle, P.J.