

**INFORMATION ABOUT EMERGENCY FAMILY COURT OPERATIONS CHANGES  
EFFECTIVE FROM 3/24/2020 TO 4/15/2020 (2<sup>nd</sup> Revision - 3/24/20)**

The San Francisco Superior Court has been closely monitoring the public health emergency response to COVID-19 in conjunction with the city's leadership, including the Mayor's Office, Department of Public Health, and CCSF Emergency Services, and the state judicial leadership. The Court continues to be committed to balance access to justice with public health concerns. As a result, the Court will continue to provide services with the following operational changes effective Tuesday, March 24, 2020 through April 15, 2020:

**UPDATE RE: TRIALS AND LONG CAUSE HEARINGS:**

The San Francisco Superior Court issued an updated General Order Re: Implementation of Emergency Relief Pursuant to Government Code Section 68115 by Chair of Judicial Council on March 24, 2020. Accordingly:

Pursuant to Government Code § 68115 and the Chief Justice's Order, effective immediately, this Court HEREBY FINDS AND ORDERS AS FOLLOWS:

The time for filing papers with the court regarding: (a) petitions for dissolution of marriage, legal separation or nullity; (b) petitions to establish parental relationship; (c) a summons and complaint filed by the Department of Child Support Services; (d) Requests for Order, except ex parte requests and requests for Domestic Violence Restraining Orders; and (e) other matters as determined by the Supervising Judge of the Unified Family Court.

1. All family law trials and Fam. Code § 217 evidentiary hearings in Departments 403, 404, and 405, excluding Requests for Domestic Violence Restraining Order (DVRO), scheduled between Monday, March 23, 2020, through **Monday, June 22, 2020**, ("affected family case") are hereby vacated. All DVRO trials scheduled between March 17, 2020, and April 15, 2020, will be continued by the court for 21 days, except when child custody and visitation are an issue. When the court resumes normal operations, the court will set new trial dates for all affected family cases, taking into consideration the order and any statutory priority for the affected family cases. Department 416 will continue to reset matters as needed.
2. For all affected family cases, except where the dates to conduct discovery have passed, the last dates to conduct discovery and expert discovery are hereby vacated. The last date to conduct discovery and expert discovery for every affected family case where discovery did not close will be determined by the new trial date.
3. For family law matters, San Francisco Local Rules of Court, Local Rule 11.13 continues to apply.
4. The dates for mandatory settlement conferences in all family law cases are hereby vacated. When the court resumes normal operations, the court will set new mandatory settlement conferences dates.
5. The Court hereby extends by not more than 21 days the duration of any temporary restraining order that would otherwise expire from March 16, 2020, to April 15, 2020, inclusive, because

the emergency condition described within the March 16, 2020, Order of the Chief Justice prevented the court from conducting proceedings to determine whether a permanent order should be entered. (Government Code section 68115(a)(7)).

Trials that were not already in progress will be placed on a future Trial Setting Calendar. Telephonic appearances will be allowed for all Trial Setting Conferences.

**The Court will continue or reset all “short cause” and other Family Law matters for 30 days, including mediation services, except for ex parte requests, temporary restraining orders, child abduction due process hearings, and Domestic Violence Restraining Orders where visitation or custody is an issue.**

For all hearings or mediations that are not continued or reset, **parties are encouraged to appear by telephone.** Prior notice and approval is not required. Contact the clerk in Department 403 at (415) 551-3741 not later than 8:45 a.m. on the day of your hearing and provide your name and phone number, and the case name. It is the attorney and/or litigant’s responsibility to be available for the call between 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. If you appear in person, please be mindful to follow public health instructions for “social distancing” in the courtroom and public areas, including sitting at least 2 seats apart.

**Domestic Violence Restraining Orders (DVRO) where Visitation or Custody is an issue:**

During this time period, Requests for DVRO where visitation or custody is an issue will continue to be heard on Wednesday mornings at 8:30 a.m. on a combined calendar in Department 403. Cases regularly assigned to Department 404 will maintain their assignments.

All other DVRO requests will be continued for 30 days. Temporary Restraining Orders (in cases not involving child custody and visitation) that would expire between March 17, 2020, through April 15, 2020, will be extended by the Court for 21 days.

FCS orientation and mediations are suspended.

**Child Custody and Visitation Readiness Calendar**

FCS orientation and mediations are suspended.

**Scheduled Requests for Order:**

Tentative Rulings for Departments 403 and 404 will continue to be posted online as usual beginning at 2:00 p.m. on the court day before the scheduled hearing. The tentative ruling may be substantive, or may indicate the new hearing date. Parties should continue to follow SF Local Rule 11.7(D)(3), including notifying the Court and the other party if there is any disagreement. If a party does not agree with the substantive tentative ruling and would like to present oral argument, the matter will be continued for 30 days.

### **Ex parte requests**

Ex parte orders may be requested when needed to (1) help prevent an immediate danger or irreparable harm to a party or to the children involved in the matter, or (2) help prevent immediate loss or damage to property subject to disposition in the case. An ex parte request to change child custody or visitation orders will not be granted absent a very strong factual showing of imminent danger or severe detriment to the child. Cal. Rule of Court 5.151; SF Local Rule 11.8(A).

Ex parte requests may be submitted without reserving a court hearing pursuant to the notice requirements of SF Local Rule 11.8(A). Ex parte requests for orders, Responses, and Replies must be delivered to the designated drop box located on the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor at CCC, 400 McAllister Street pursuant to the deadlines contained in SF Local Rule 11.8(A). The Court's Order may be picked up from the Clerk's Office outside Room 103, 400 McAllister Street, after 1:30 p.m. each day.

### **Child Support Matters in Department 416**

Child support hearings will be continued for at least 30 days. Any necessary hearings not continued or reset by the Court will be conducted by telephone. Notice to the parties will be provided by the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS). SF DCSS can be contacted at (415) 356-2700.

Ex Partes (only) are being accepted and heard as needed (telephonically only) in Dept. 416 for now. In addition, please email a courtesy copy of any Ex Parte filing dropped off to the court to all of the following: [jowong@sftc.org](mailto:jowong@sftc.org); [gfeliciano@sftc.org](mailto:gfeliciano@sftc.org); [aandreoizzi@sftc.org](mailto:aandreoizzi@sftc.org); and [fyokota@sftc.org](mailto:fyokota@sftc.org). Please be sure to "cc" all counsel/parties.

Attorneys are encouraged to first contact SF DCSS directly for any enforcement issues, or other issues in which a stipulation may be possible (to avoid the need for filing an RFO and setting a hearing). The legal line at SF DCSS is (415) 356-2700. Drop boxes are also available on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of Civic Center Courthouse for regular filings, but there may be a delay in processing the documents due to extremely limited staff availability. (The court will keep track of date a filing is dropped off).

### **Rally Supervised Visitation Services**

Rally Supervised Visitation Services at St. Francis Hospital have been suspended until April 7, 2020. Rally can be contacted at (415) 353-6595 for additional information.

### **All Other Scheduled Hearings, Trials, and Judicial Settlement Conferences:**

The parties will be notified by the Court of the continuance date(s).

All filings will take place by drop box located on the lower level of the Civic Center Courthouse at Room 103. Endorsed filed copies will also be available for pick up at Room 103.

AS A REMINDER, THOSE WHO ARE ILL SHOULD STAY HOME; The Court may ask members of the public who are exhibiting visible symptoms of illness such as coughing to leave.

For questions and concerns, please contact Acting UFC Court Manager Frances Yokota at (415) 551-3914
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