



March 17, 2020

*** Press Release ***

TO THE CITIZENS OF CHIPPEWA COUNTY

As we are all grappling with the COVID – 19 global pandemic, the Chippewa County Circuit Courts have met to determine what actions the Courts should take to prevent the spread of the virus to our citizens that visit the Courthouse for court related activities and for the County employees that work in the court system. Attached to this press release are the ORDER DECLARING HEALTH EMERGENCY and the CHIPPEWA COUNTY COURT SYSTEM PLAN FOR PANDEMIC COVID – 19. Both of these documents have been approved by all three Circuit Court Judges, Steven H. Gibbs, James M. Isaacson, and Steven R. Cray. These emergency orders were adopted by the Courts as our judges believe that these measures are necessary to minimize the risk to everyone that has business in the Chippewa County Circuit Courts.

We are all in this together as we battle this pandemic. The Plan that is being implemented effective at 5:00 p.m., on Wednesday, March 18, 2020 is being put in place to provide another level of protection for our citizens as we fight the spread of this disease.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Randy Scholz'.

Randy Scholz
Chippewa County Administrator

ORDER DECLARING HEALTH EMERGENCY

The Circuit Court Judges for Chippewa County determine that the risks and potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus outweigh the need to continue the normal court calendars. The Judges hereby declare a Health Emergency.

This Health Emergency shall commence on March 18, 2020, at 5:00 p.m.

The procedures outlined in the Chippewa County Court System Plan for Pandemic COVID-19 shall be put in place.

The Plan for Pandemic COVID-19 shall continue until further order.

Dated this day of March, 2020.



STEVEN H. GIBBS
CIRCUIT COURT, BRANCH I



JAMES M. ISAACSON
CIRCUIT COURT, BRANCH II



STEVEN R. CRAY
CIRCUIT COURT, BRANCH III

CHIPPEWA COUNTY COURT SYSTEM PLAN FOR PANDEMIC COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is a threat to the health and safety of all members of the Chippewa County community. The threat posed is worldwide in nature and can be addressed only by the community working together.

To ensure the health of the community as well as all participants in the Chippewa County court system, the Circuit Judges of Chippewa County will address the COVID-19 pandemic in the following manner:

1. Declaration of Health Emergency.
 - A. The Judges of Chippewa County will determine when the risks and potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus outweigh the need to continue the normal court calendar. The Judges of Chippewa County will then declare a health emergency.
 - B. Once a health emergency is declared, the procedures described in this plan will be put into effect.
2. Court Procedure During the Health Emergency.
 - A. The Judge assigned to intake on a particular day will handle all matters before the circuit courts of Chippewa County. (the "Intake Court")
 - B. All matters which have a time limit mandated by law shall be scheduled and heard by the Intake Court.
 - C. All hearings and trials not mandated by law to occur within a specific time shall be rescheduled after May 1, 2020.

D. Examples of matters with time limits mandated by law include:

1. Criminal bond hearings.
2. Preliminary hearings where time limits have not been waived.
3. Criminal Jury trials where a speedy trial demand has been made.
4. Juvenile matters.
5. Involuntary Mental Commitments.
6. Restraining orders under Chapter 813 of the WI Statutes.
7. Search Warrants.
8. Guardianships and Protective Placements.
9. Termination of Parental Rights.

E. The Clerk of Court's, Probate Office, Court Reporters, Judicial Assistants, and the Sheriff's Department will provide coverage for matters before the Intake Court but are encouraged to provide the minimum staff necessary to conduct matters before the Intake Court.

F. Jury trials during the health emergency will have the following provisions:

1. Jurors who have tested positive for COVID-19 will be excused.
2. Jurors who are sick shall be given a postponement.
3. Jurors who has a family member that has tested positive for COVID-19 will be given a postponement.
4. The Circuit Court system will provide all jury members with appropriate personal protections as are feasible.
5. The Court system will minimize contact of jury members with the general public and others to the greatest extent possible.

6. The Court system will coordinate with the local Public Health Department to provide medical evaluation for any juror who demonstrates signs and symptoms of COVID-19. If the juror has the symptoms of COVID-19, the juror will be excused from jury duty.
 7. If a juror fails to appear for jury duty, current protocols for handling failures to appear will take place.
- G. The Intake Court may hear additional matters if the Intake Judge determines that not holding a hearing will cause irreparable harm to a party or to the public.
- H. Line of Succession.
1. If the Intake Judge becomes ill, the Judge next assigned intake will serve as the Intake Judge.
 2. District wide assignment. Chippewa County Judges are subject to assignment as determined by the Chief Judge for the 10th Judicial Administrative District.
 3. Reserve Judges and Court Commissioners, as determined by the Chief Judge of the 10th Judicial Administrative District, may serve as Intake Judges.
3. Declaration of the End of the Health Emergency.
- A. When the Judges determine that the normal court calendar practice may begin again without undue risk to the health and safety of the community and court personnel, the Judges shall declare the health emergency at an end.

B. Normal court practices shall commence on the date the health emergency ends.

Dated this 16th day of March, 2020.



STEVEN H. GIBBS
CIRCUIT JUDGE, BR I



JAMES M. ISAACSON
CIRCUIT JUDGE, BR II



STEVEN R. CRAY
CIRCUIT JUDGE, BR III