

DC Superior Court Operations & DC Administrative Hearings



**During the COVID-19
Public Health Emergency (PHE)
As of April 1, 2021**

GENERAL COURT OPERATIONS DURING COVID-19 PHE



- The Court is generally closed to in-person business at least through May 20, 2021
- Court filings must be conducted by mail or online
- Hearings are being conducted virtually, which means litigants may participate via phone or video conference
- Domestic relations, parentage & support, domestic violence, small claims, and housing conditions cases are being scheduled but at a much slower pace
- Debt collection and eviction cases are not being scheduled

VIRTUAL HEARINGS: HOW TO TAKE PART IN A REMOTE HEARING

- When you receive notice of your next hearing from the Court, it will have information on how to participate in your hearing remotely by video or phone
- The Court will give you step-by-step instructions on how to participate in the remote hearing



TIPS FOR PARTICIPATING IN VIDEO HEARINGS

- Download the court's hearing software, WebEX
- Do a test run in advance
- The Court will provide you with a WebEx link for your hearing
- Set up the camera at eye level
- If you are using your phone, prop it up so you can look at it without holding it
- Look at the camera when you speak and avoid moving around
- Sit in a well-lit room with no bright lights behind you
- If possible, sit in front of a blank wall



DC SUPERIOR COURT REMOTE HEARING SITES

Remote Hearing Sites are available throughout the community to help litigants who may not have access to computers or the internet. Litigants must **call 202-879-1900** or email **DCCourtsRemoteSites@dcsc.gov** at least 24 hours before your hearing to schedule a remote access computer station.

Remote Site - 1

Balance and Restorative Justice Center
1215 South Capitol Street, SW
Washington, DC 20003

Remote Site - 2

Balance and Restorative Justice Center
1110 V Street, SE
Washington, DC 20020

Remote Site - 3

Balance and Restorative Justice Center
118 Q Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002



Remote Site - 4

Balance and Restorative Justice Center
925 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Remote Site - 5

Reeves Center
2000 14th Street, NW, 2nd Floor – Community Room
Washington, DC 20009

DOMESTIC RELATIONS BRANCH OPERATIONS DURING COVID-19 PHE

- In general, all hearings and trials are being scheduled at the discretion of the assigned judge
- Emergency motions approved for an emergency hearing will be scheduled same-day if filed by noon; if you file after noon, you may get a hearing that day or else the next day
- Expedited hearings may be scheduled when the judge does not think the matter is an emergency but believes a hearing should be scheduled sooner than a regular status hearing
- Written notice of your hearing will be provided to you by email
- If you lose your written notice, call the Family Court Clerk's Office for instructions at **202-879-1212**
- Get the docket and paperwork in your case by emailing: drbcorrespondence@dcsc.gov

PROCESS FOR FILING COMPLAINTS IN DOMESTIC RELATIONS BRANCH

- All litigants filing a Complaint **must email** the following documents as separate attachments to Family Court Central Intake Center (CIC) at FamilyCourtCIC@DCSC.GOV:
 - (1) A completed, signed Complaint
 - (2) A completed cross-reference form
 - (3) A completed and signed fee waiver/IFP request form (if requesting)
 - (4) A completed, signed motion or any other pleadings or attachments (if applicable)
- Once your documents are processed, you will receive an email from CIC with the relevant documents: summons(es), complaints, motions, notices and any other submitted pleadings or attachments.
 - If you requested a fee waiver and it was granted, your filing is complete
 - If your fee waiver was not granted or you did not request one, CIC will provide instructions and a filing code to assist you with completing the filing process through CaseFileXpress at <https://www.dccourts.gov/superior-court/e-filing>

PROCESS FOR FILING PLEADINGS IN ONGOING DOMESTIC RELATIONS BRANCH CASES

- Self-represented litigants with a fee waiver filing pleadings in an ongoing matter have the option to file:
 - by email to FamilyCourtCIC@DCSC.GOV with their pleading attached; or
 - by efile through CaseFileXpress at <https://www.dccourts.gov/superior-court/e-filing>
- Parties represented by counsel and self-represented litigants without a fee waiver filing pleadings in an ongoing matter must efile through CaseFileXpress
- For Emergency Motions:
 - If filing by email, write “Emergency Motion” in the subject line
 - If filing by CaseFileXpress, state in the comments section that you are requesting an emergency hearing
- Failure to identify an emergency motion as noted above may result in the motion not being processed in a timely manner

SERVICE OF PROCESS DOMESTIC RELATIONS BRANCH DURING PHE

- Service of Process can be done in person or via certified mail, and electronically during the public health emergency
- Electronic service can be accomplished via text message or email
- The serving party must prove service to the satisfaction of the assigned judge, including showing that the electronic method of service was “reasonably calculated to give actual notice”
 - For email, this means you need to provide a screenshot showing the documents are attached to the email you sent
 - For text message, you must provide a screenshot of each page of the document you are serving, and each screenshot must show the number the text was sent to and the date it was sent
- An Affidavit of Service must be filed evidencing the service method used
- Initial hearings are generally being scheduled 40 -60 days from initial filing, although the assigned judge may decide not to schedule until proof of service or a responsive pleading is filed

DOMESTIC RELATIONS BRANCH COURT-BASED RESOURCES

- **Self-represented litigants** can receive assistance with filing requests for fee waivers, custody, divorce, or child support by contacting the Family Court Self-Help Center at 202-879-0096
- **The Supervised Visitation Center** is conducting intakes and supervised visits remotely
- **Mediation** is being conducted via videoconference or phone
- **The DC Bar's Family Law Assistance Network (FLAN):**
 - Individuals who want help with a **DC** custody, child support, parentage, or divorce matter can call **FLAN's** intake and triage line at **(202) 844-5428**
 - FLAN's intake line is open Monday-Friday, 9 am – 5pm and is closed on weekends and holidays

PARENTAGE AND SUPPORT (P&S) BRANCH PROCEEDINGS DURING COVID-19 PHE

- New P&S complaints and pleadings can be filed in the same manner as domestic relations branch cases
- To obtain case-related information, email familycourtp&sbranch@dcsc.gov
- P&S branch has not provided guidance on changes to service of process; accordingly, assume service of process requirements are the same as before the PHE

PARENTAGE AND SUPPORT (P&S) BRANCH HEARINGS

- All P&S case hearings are being conducted remotely
- P&S hearings are scheduled in 30-minute increments
- Pro se litigants needing legal assistance with child support matters may contact the **Child Support Resource Center Hotline at 202-791-3996**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROCEEDINGS DURING COVID-19 PHE

- **Court is closed** – Petitioners do not have access to DV Intake Centers
- To file for a TPO or CPO:

Call SAFE at **800-407-5048**

OR

File online at:

<https://www.dccourts.gov/services/domestic-violence-matters/dv-forms-help-online>

- All hearings take place by **videoconference** or **phone**
- All paperwork is processed **online** and emailed to litigants
- Paperwork can be filed at any time, but will only be processed during **normal business hours**

OBTAINING A TEMPORARY PROTECTION ORDER (TPO)

Fill out
Petition for
CPO online –
make sure to
request TPO
hearing



Download
copy of
Petition from
final page



Send Petition via email to
DomesticViolenceManagement@dcsc.gov



Clerks will call
petitioner to
swear you in
and complete
filing process



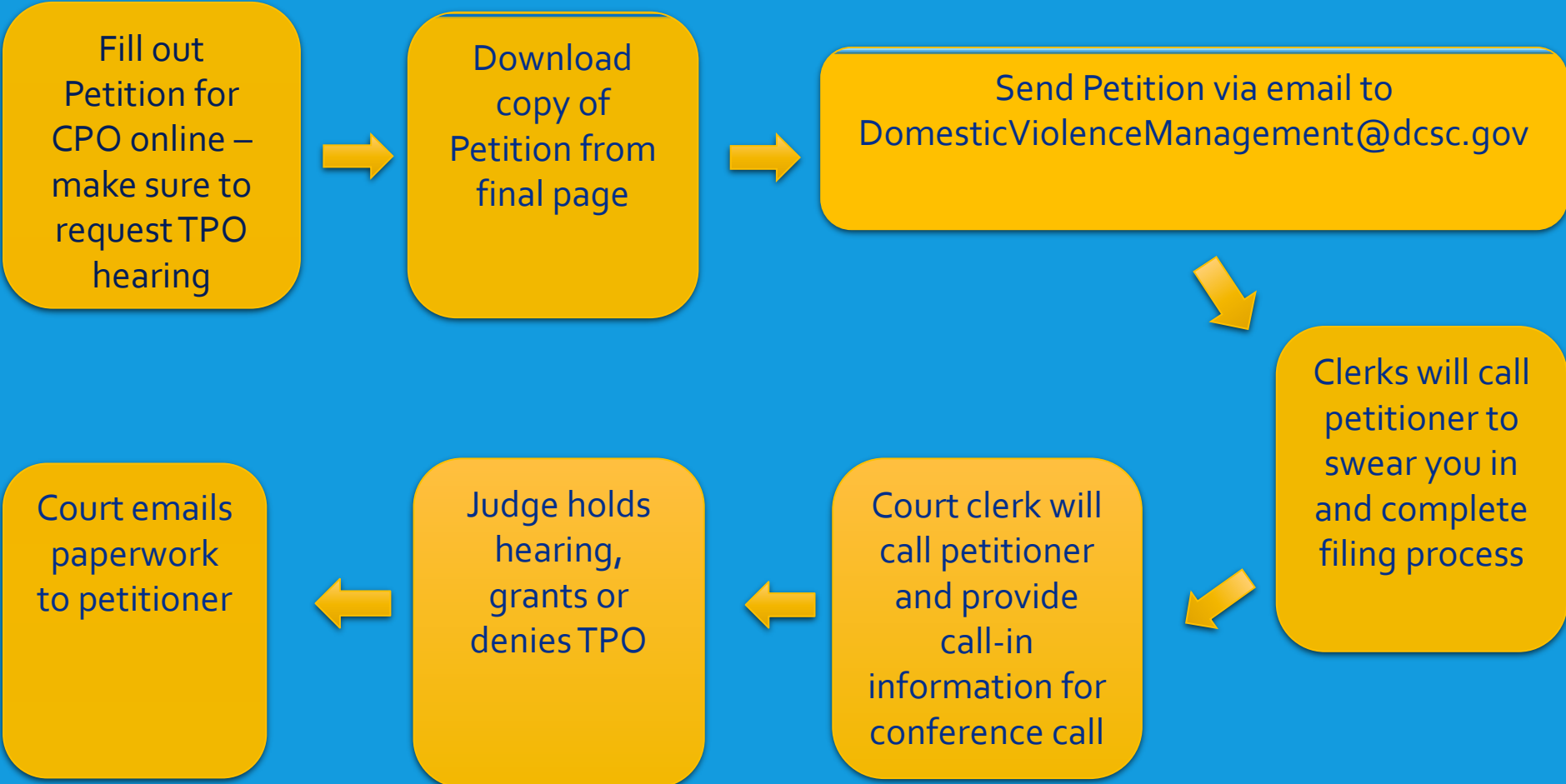
Court emails
paperwork
to petitioner



Judge holds
hearing,
grants or
denies TPO



Court clerk will
call petitioner
and provide
call-in
information for
conference call



YOUR CIVIL PROTECTION ORDER (CPO) TRIAL

- To facilitate remote hearings, the Domestic Violence Division encourages all parties to contact the Clerk's Office at [\(202\) 879-0157](tel:2028790157) (to provide contact information, including any telephone numbers and email addresses where parties can be reached. Please call this number to provide your contact information of any parties.
- As of November 9, 2020, the Division started hearing all cases set on the Civil Protection Order calendars. All CPO trials and CPO-related motions, except motions to reinstate a petition for a CPO, will be held on the date listed in a CPO and ERPO Scheduling Order issued by the DVD presiding judge.
- Additionally, upon request of the parties and pursuant to the Court's availability, parties may also request an earlier hearing date for a CPO case.
- CPO trials are happening months out, not two weeks after you obtain a TPO.

DAY OF YOUR CPO TRIAL: JOINING THE VIRTUAL HEARING

- The Court requests that all parties join the remote hearing by video through the WebEx app (if you have access to a camera)
- If you can, you should download the WebEx app to your phone, tablet or computer by clicking this link: <https://www.webex.com/downloads.html>
- To join by video, click this link: <https://dccourts.webex.com/meet/dvdhearings> (link works best using Google Chrome web browser, but any internet browser should work)
- If the link does not work, you can join by video by visiting: <https://dccourts.webex.com> and typing the meeting code **173 720 1234**
- For technical questions about joining the hearing, contact the Courtroom Recording and Technology Branch at **202-879-1928, option 2.**

If you can't join by video, call the Judge's Chambers to check-in for your hearing: **Judge Anderson: 202-879-0200 Judge Knowles: 202-879-8750**

DAY OF YOUR CPO TRIAL: CHECK-IN PROCEDURES

- You must “check in” by logging onto the **WebEx link** that is listed on your NOHOTA
- Check-in is at **8:30 a.m.** but you should try to log on by 8:20 a.m. to make sure you can address any potential technical issues that may come up
- Once you are logged on, the clerk will place you in a “breakout room” to check you in and confirm your contact info
- You will then hang up and wait to be called by either the Attorney Negotiator or the clerk when the Judge is ready for your trial
 - If both parties have checked in, the attorney negotiator will start negotiations through the phone
 - If the attorney negotiator determines the parties cannot come to an agreement, your case will likely go to trial that same day

DAY OF YOUR CPO TRIAL: CPO TRIAL ON WEBEX

- The court will try to mirror the procedures that it would normally follow if it were hearing your case in person:
 - The clerk will call you once the judge is able to hear your case
 - Keep yourself on mute unless you are speaking
 - The clerk will call the case and each party will introduce themselves, and then each party will be able to testify and present their evidence
- Exhibits: You will be able to introduce exhibits during the hearing. You should email the Judge's chambers in advance to get instructions on how the Judge wants you to send the exhibits
- Witnesses: You should have your witnesses ready to log on and testify at any point during the day
- If the Judge grants you a CPO, the judge will email you the final order

SMALL CLAIMS COURT OPERATIONS DURING COVID-19 PHE

- Small Claims court is available for cases below \$10,000. Some small claims cases are still being scheduled. For example matters in people's court, auto subrogation cases, and tort cases, are active.
- **Debt collection cases involving consumer debts are not being scheduled.** The DC Council debt collection moratorium has put a hold on these cases. This moratorium is scheduled to end in late May 2021.

HOW TO FILE A SMALL CLAIMS CASE

- For a case in which you are suing for \$10,000 or less, file a Statement of Claim and Information Sheet
- Attorneys and self-represented litigants can file documents electronically using CaseFileXpress at <https://dc.casefilexpress.com/Login.aspx>
- People not registered for CaseFileXpress may file documents by mail or by putting them in the drop box in the lobby of the Moultrie Courthouse (500 Indiana Avenue, NW) to the left of the Information Counter
- The mailing address for filings is Superior Court of the District of Columbia, Civil Clerk's Office, Room 5000, 500 Indiana Ave NW, Washington, DC 20001
- Small Claims Clerk's Office: (202) 879-1120
- Emergency motions must be emailed to civilefilings@dcsc.gov
- People without lawyers can submit applications for waiver of filing fees by email to civilefilings@dcsc.gov

SMALL CLAIMS HEARING PROCESS

- Hearings in cases that are moving forward are all virtual and can be attended by telephone or video
- Litigants will receive a phone number or link to the hearing with their court paperwork
- The first scheduled hearing will take place virtually at the scheduled time
- After the judge makes sure service took place, virtual mediation will be scheduled
- A trial will not be scheduled until parties go through mediation
- If no agreement is reached through mediation, the parties will go before a judge to determine their next step

SMALL CLAIMS RESOURCES

- Several organizations have collaborated to staff a Debt Collection Defense hotline. You can call this hotline:
- Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST at **(202) 851-3387**
- For small claims information, call the Small Claims Resource Center an information line at **(202) 849-3608**; this Center is operated by Neighborhood Legal Services Project (NLSP)
- The Consumer Law Resource Center, an information line run by the DC Bar Pro Bono Center, can be reached at **(202) 780-2574**

LANDLORD TENANT COURT OPERATIONS DURING COVID-19 PHE

- All evictions, foreclosure proceedings, and debt collection proceedings are stayed to the extent required by statute
- Court is generally not open to the public and hearings are virtual
- Judges conduct remote hearings five days per week in virtual courtrooms
- No parties or attorneys should appear in person unless specifically directed to do so by a judge
- To facilitate remote hearings, the Civil Division encourages all parties to contact the Civil Division Clerk's Offices to provide contact information, including any telephone numbers and email addresses where parties can be reached
- L&T Branch Clerk's Office contact information:
202-879-4879 or LandlordandTenantDocket@dcsc.gov

LANDLORD TENANT COURT RESOURCES

- Office of Tenant Advocate legal resources:
 - Go online to <https://ota.dc.gov/>; click on “OTA Housing Assistance” and “Community Service”; click on “Ask the Director” and complete the Request; and then click “Submit”;

OR

- Call **202-719-6560** and leave a message
- The Landlord Tenant Legal Assistance Network (LTLAN) and Landlord Tenant Resource Center (LTRC), an information line run by the DC Bar Pro Bono Center, can be reached by phone: **202-780-2575**

HOUSING CONDITIONS COURT OPERATIONS DURING COVID-19 PHE

- The Housing Conditions Court is a special court where tenants can sue landlords to fix housing code violations
- Housing Conditions Court is being conducted virtually and holds hearings once per week on **Tuesdays** via Webex
- Instead of filing in person, you can file your court papers by emailing the documents, along with any photos or videos of the housing conditions, to civilefiling@dcsc.gov
- If you are not able to email the documents, you can leave paper copies of the documents in the drop box at DC Superior Court, 500 Indiana Avenue NW
- All housing inspections are also virtual
- You or someone in your household will need to use FaceTime or Google Duo for a video call with the inspector to show them the conditions in your home

OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS OPERATIONS DURING COVID-19 PHE

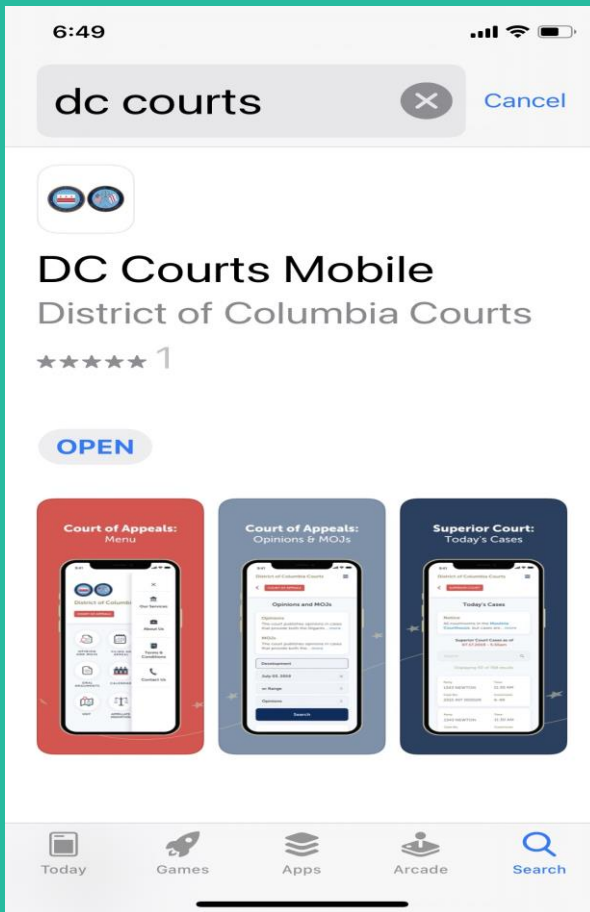
- OAH is not open for walk-in visits but is still accepting cases and conducting hearings remotely through a computer program called WebEx
- While you currently cannot file papers in person, you may still file your papers through fax, email, and mail
- OAH recommends you file via email if possible
 - OAH email address: oah.filing@dc.gov
 - OAH mailing address: 441 4th St. NW, Suite 450N, WDC 20001
 - OAH fax number: (202) 442-4789

OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS PROCESS (CONT'D)

- You can request a hearing in writing *and* by telephone ; to request a fair hearing by telephone, you can call **(202) 442-9094**
- If you have an upcoming hearing, it will be scheduled through the Webex platform
- Once your hearing is scheduled, OAH Legal Assistants will send a notice to you and the Department of Human Services (DHS) or Department of Health Care Finance (DHCF)
- Please call OAH to let them know your preferred method of contact at:
(202) 442-9094
- Continuance requests:
 - To ask for a continuance in a DHS case, email dhs.oah.esa@dc.gov
 - To ask for a continuance in a DHCF case, email dhcfcg.filing@dc.gov
 - Then, Complete the *Request for a Different Hearing Date* form, available on the OAH website at <https://oah.dc.gov/node/1234606>

DC COURTS HAS A NEW APP FOR YOUR PHONE!

Download From the **APPLE STORE** or **GOOGLE PLAY!**



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

COVID-19

LEGAL RESOURCES & SOCIAL SERVICES

FOR **LEGAL
INFORMATION &
RESOURCES** RELATED
TO COVID-19, VISIT

LawHelp.org/DC

Visit the COVID-19 resources pages at www.LawHelp.org/DC for information about legal resources and social services available in the District of Columbia during the COVID-19 public health emergency.



FOR
**DEBT AND
CONSUMER**
INFORMATION,
VISIT

LawHelp.org/DC



FOR
**DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE**
INFORMATION,
VISIT

LawHelp.org/DC



FOR
**FOOD, DIAPER,
AND HYGIENE
ITEMS**
INFORMATION,
VISIT

LawHelp.org/DC



FOR
**EMPLOYMENT &
UNEMPLOYMENT**
INFORMATION,
VISIT

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FOR
HOUSING
INFORMATION,
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FOR
**UTILITY
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Notice:

These slides were compiled based on the best information available at the time from the court and various legal services providers as a helpful resource for navigating DC Superior Court and the Office of Administrative Hearings operations during the COVID-19 public health emergency

Nothing in these slides should be considered legal advice or should be relied on as definitive guidance

There is no guarantee that the information contained in these slides is accurate or that an individual's experience with court or administrative hearing operations will be the same as what is presented here

This is just a starting point and all information should be independently verified