



MEMORANDUM

TO: DCF All Staff
FROM: CT DCF Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes
DATE: April 8, 2020
SUBJECT: Orders from the Hon. Judge Conway - Court Hearings

We have been working collaboratively with the Judicial Department and discussing our joint concerns about safety of all people participating in Juvenile Court hearings. I am pleased to share the following court orders from Judge Conway that will apply to all Juvenile Court hearings effective April 8, 2020. I appreciate the Court's willingness to develop new procedures to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

One thing that will remain the same. Our staff will need to arrive at the courthouse timely and be prepared to attend the hearing if our presence is required by the court. As of today, Bridgeport and Hartford are the only two juvenile courts open.

When the cases are resolved by agreement, our staff will not need to enter the courthouse. Our experience thus far has been that a large number of cases have been resolved by agreement at the 10-day OTC hearing.

If an agreement is not reached, we need to be prepared to enter the courthouse and participate in the hearing, so please come prepared in appropriate court attire. Also please bring your PPE and be prepared to wear your PPE if you are called into court.

When you are scheduled to attend a juvenile court hearing, please connect with the AAG in advance of the hearing and share telephone contact information. Please remain in your car when you arrive at the court and connect with the AAG for further direction.

If you have any questions, please reach out to your supervisor and/or your area office attorney for assistance.

These are the orders from the Honorable Judge Conway:

- (1) Effective Wednesday, April 8th, Orders of Temporary Custody (OTCs) conferences may be conducted with lawyers and DCF participating telephonically from inside or outside the designated courthouse.
- (2) The AAG assigned to the case shall notify the Court Service Officer (CSO) by 9 a.m. of the morning of the scheduled OTC conference of that AAG's telephonic contact information.
- (3) OCPD-Child Protection Unit will continue to provide standby attorney cell phone numbers to the clerk's office.
- (4) The CSO will convene and moderate the OTC conference as scheduled. It is essential that CSOs timely have the attorneys and DCF's telephonic contact information.
- (5) If the parties reach an agreement, the AAG will reduce the agreement to writing. The written agreement will, if relevant, include a waiver of any defects of service. The stipulated agreement shall also reflect that the respondent has been informed of his or her rights and understands his or her rights.
- (6) The AAG shall email or fax file the stipulated agreement to the clerk of the court. The parties are excused from appearing in court upon the clerk's receipt of the agreement.
- (7) If no agreement or stipulation is reached at the OTC conference, attorneys and clients shall timely appear in court.
- (8) To prevent undue delay in convening court hearings when necessary, attorneys and parties shall be in close proximity to the courthouse at the time and location designated in the exparte OTC order.