



March 17, 2020

RE: Client Advisory- Court Closures, Court Appearance Cancellations/Postponements, Writ Processing/Execution Deferment; and Anticipated Eviction processing/Filing Delays

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Dear Valued Client:

With increasing concerns regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19), we understand the need for increased communication. Because the COVID-19 situation is unprecedented and rapidly changing, we are monitoring the developing situation and will continue to provide updates outlining the latest information available to us, including our communications with the local Courts and Sheriff Offices. Please take note, the information outlined in this advisory is limited to firm clients with current or prospective eviction filings with our office and subject to change on a moment to moment basis.

As of today, there has been no state-wide suspension, moratorium or mandate that would prevent the processing of currently pending lawsuits or the filing of new evictions. However, recent changes adopted by the Courts and Sheriff Offices in some jurisdictions as a result of COVID-19 will most definitely impact normal procedural timeframes related to eviction activity. Therefore, please be prepared accordingly for delays and adjustments in established operating procedures for the Courts and Sheriff Offices.

The information listed below, by county, is what we know at this time. We are committed to future updates as new information becomes available to us. If a particular county or process is not mentioned below, then operations in that county or process are proceeding as normal at this time, to the very best of our knowledge.

Broward County – The Courts have announced a partial closure as they are not allowing entry by the general public, but are presently conducting business activity to a degree. Most or all of the Court appearances scheduled for this week have been cancelled or postponed. Assuming the Court continues to schedule court appearances, future hearings will likely be telephonic. As of March 17, 2020, the Broward County Sheriff advises that the processing and execution of Writs of Possession will be suspended until further notice.

Miami-Dade County – On March 12, 2020, the Miami-Dade County Sheriff issued a statement that all eviction activity shall be temporarily suspended. As such, Writs of Possession will not be processed or executed until further notice. As of March 17, 2020, the Dade Courts formally issued an Administrative Order implementing the courts' Continuity of Operations Plans and closing all court facilities to the public except for access required for emergency or mission critical court matters. At this time, the closure will be in effect from Tuesday, March 17, through Friday, March 27. Business activities via the Clerks of Courts Office may continue to a degree during the closure, but court appearances have been temporarily suspended, cancelled or postponed. If a court appearance is required, telephonic or otherwise, you will be immediately notified in writing.



Osceola and Orange Counties – The Courts have announced a partial closure as they are not allowing entry by the general public, but are presently conducting business activity to a degree. Assuming the Court continues to schedule court appearances, future hearings will likely be telephonic. At this time, the Orange County Sheriff issued a notice that they are temporarily suspending writs of possession for evictions until further notice.

Palm Beach County – Some Judges have cancelled or continued court appearances until April 1, 2020. If a pending case with our firm is affected, you will be notified in writing with an update. At the present time, the Palm Beach Courts have implemented some adjustments but remain open for operation. Beginning March 27, 2020, all Palm Beach Courthouses will be closed each Friday through and including May 1, 2020. At the present time, the Sheriff's Office is conducting regular business activity.

Again, even if formal changes in protocol have not been announced, you will likely experience processing/docketing delays, cancellation, or postponement of appearances. For example, barring electronic submission, residents may not have the ability to file an Answer/Defensive Pleading to an Eviction Action, or make a deposit into the court registry due to court closures, and Judges are likely to process cases with sensitivity towards said lack of access.

Effective immediately, unless mandated by the Court, we will be requesting the Courts to set all court appearances telephonically. Therefore, you may expect permitted or ordered court appearances to be held telephonically with remote electronic processing. It is likely that the procedure for telephonic hearings will be handled differently by each Judge, and as such we will notify you as soon as possible of the procedures you should follow to attend a telephonic hearing. In closing, we would recommend that you err on the side of caution, and exercise reasonable business and legal practices through this unfortunate time riddled with many unknowns at this time.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions, concerns or for clarification. Our focus, dedication, and support are unwavering as we navigate these unique times and we hope you and your loved ones remain safe and healthy. Many thanks for your attention in this matter and best wishes.

Warm Regards,

Your Friends at Barfield McCain PA