

VAN BUREN COUNTY – ALL COURT POLICY (36 th Circuit Court, 7 th District Court and Van Buren County Probate Courts)		
SUBJECT: Public Health Emergency Operations Plan / Policy	SECTION: Administration	DATE: 9/23/2020
PREPARED BY: Frank Hardester	NUMBER: Policy 2.006	RESCINDS: 3/17/2020, 3/24/2020, 4/14/2020, 4/29/2020, 5/13/2020, 5/27/2020, 6/10/2020, 7/20/2020

REFERENCES:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Executive Orders issued by the Governor of Michigan](#)
- [Michigan Supreme Court Administrative Orders](#)
- [Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning COVID-19](#)
- [Policy 4.002 Digital Audio-Video Recordings of Court Proceedings](#)

Van Buren County Courts are open to conduct court operations Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The courts will continue to address after hour matters using established protocols. Visitors entering the building will be subject to COVID-19 screening procedures that include a health questionnaire and temperature check. Filings and inquires may be handled in person and remotely as described in this plan. The court is under directives of the Michigan Supreme Court to have a phased-in reopening plan. See Local Administrative Order [Plan to Return to Full Capacity Phase Two](#). This action is being taken to:

- Respond to the [Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning COVID-19](#) by the President of the United States.
- Comply with the [Executive Orders issued by the Governor of Michigan](#).
- Follow recommendations from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC).
- Comply with the [Michigan Supreme Court Administrative Orders](#).
- Combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Reduce the risk posed to the public, court staff, and others, while protecting public safety and the legal rights of our citizens.

PROCEDURES

A. Contact Information

Patrons may call, email, or visit the court using the information below. Messages and emails are being addressed daily.

1. 36th Circuit Court:
 - Mail: 212 E. Paw Paw Street, Suite 212
Paw Paw, MI 49079
 - Email: 36circuitcourt@vbco.org
 - Phone: (269) 657-8200 ext. 2340

- a. County Clerk:
 - Mail: 212 E. Paw Paw Street, Suite 101
Paw Paw, MI 49079
 - Email: clerk@vbco.org
 - Phone: (269) 657-8218

- b. Friend of the Court (FOC):
 - Mail: 219 E. Paw Paw Street
Paw Paw, MI 49079
 - Email: foc@vbco.org
 - Phone: (269) 657-7734

- c. Juvenile Court:
 - Mail: 212 E. Paw Paw Street, Suite 240
Paw Paw, MI 49079
 - Email: juvenilem@vbco.org
 - Phone: (269) 657-8237

C. Payments

1. Court payments may be made in person, or as follows:
 - a. Online: <https://www.vbco.org/courtpayments.asp>
 - b. Dropbox at court entry locations
 - c. By mail, find locations at <https://www.vbco.org/locationshours.asp> .

D. Probation / Caseworker Supervision

1. All supervision of clients/defendants will be conducted remotely using electronic communication or in person as needed.
2. Home visits are allowed as long as proper PPE and CDC guidelines are followed for social distancing.

E. Circuit Court

1. Criminal Matters

- a. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding remote appearance.
- b. Filings must be made with the county clerk's office by email, mail, or by using the drop box near the court entrance. In person filings may also be made as needed. The clerk's office contact information is as follows:
Email: clerk@vbco.org
Phone: (269) 657-8218
- c. If a party is filing a motion, the court will be in communication with the filing party to arrange the date and time of the proceeding. If you have concerns about the communication, or if you wish to contact the court regarding scheduling, feel free to contact the court at:
Email: williamsm@vbco.org
Phone: (269) 657-8200 ext. 2345

2. Civil Matters

- a. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding remote appearance.
- b. Filings must be made with the county clerk's office by email, mail, or by using the drop box near the court entrance. In person filings may also be made as needed. The clerk's office contact information is as follows:
Email: clerk@vbco.org
Phone: (269) 657-8218
- c. Upon receipt of filings, the court will be in communication with the filing party to arrange the date and time of the proceeding. If you have concerns about the communication, or if you wish to contact the court regarding scheduling, feel free to contact the court at:
Email: cowgillk@vbco.org
Phone: (269) 657-8200 ext. 2213

3. Domestic Matters

- a. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding remote appearance.
- b. Filings must be made with the county clerk's office by email, mail, or by using the drop box near the court entrance. In person filings may also be made as needed. The clerk's office contact information is as follows:
Email: clerk@vbco.org
Phone: (269) 657-8218
- c. Upon receipt of filings, the court will be in communication with the filing party to arrange the date and time of the proceeding. If you have concerns about the communication, or if you wish to contact the court regarding scheduling, feel free to contact the court at:
Email: schmittm@vbco.org
Phone: (269) 657-8200 ext. 2342

4. Friend of the Court (FOC)

- a. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding

- remote appearance.
- b. Specialized programs such as the 24/7 Dad program will be postponed until further notice.
- c. If you have specific questions, contact the FOC at:
Email: foc@vbco.org
Phone: (269) 657-7734

5. Juvenile (Delinquency / Neglect)

- a. The Judicial Officers will process emergency proceedings using the normal on call weekly rotation.
- b. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding remote appearance.
- c. Filings must be made with the juvenile clerk's office by email, mail or by using the drop box near the court entrance. In person filings may also be made as needed. The clerk's office contact information is as follows:
Email: juvenilem@vbco.org
Phone: (269) 657-8237

6. Personal Protection Orders (PPO's)

- a. PPO Initiation – Filings must be made with the county clerk's office by email, mail or by using the drop box near the court entrance. In person filings may also be made as needed. The clerk's office contact information is as follows:
Email: clerk@vbco.org
Phone: (269) 657-8218
- b. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding remote appearance.
- c. If you need assistance with filing, parties may contact Domestic Violence Coalition at:
Email: mhookerva1@live.com
Phone: 269-655-9008
- d. Upon receipt of filings, the court will be in communication with the filing party to arrange the date and time of the proceeding. If you have concerns about the communication, or if you wish to contact the court regarding scheduling, feel free to contact the court at:
Email: kleins@vbco.org
Phone: (269) 657-8200 ext. 2321

F. District Court

1. Criminal Matters - Misdemeanors & Felonies

- a. On misdemeanors, the arresting agency will advise defendants that the court will notify them of their next appearance date
- b. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding remote appearance.
- c. Filings must be made with the district court clerk's office by email, mail or by using the drop box near the court entrance. In person filings may also be made as needed. Upon receipt of filings, the court will be in communication with the filing party to arrange the date and time of the proceeding. If you have concerns about the communication, or if you wish to contact the court regarding scheduling, feel free to contact the court at:
Email: 7dc@vbco.org
Phone: (269) 657-8222

2. Civil Matters

- a. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding remote appearance.
- b. Filings – Filings must be made with the district court clerk's office by email, mail, or by using the drop box near the court entrance. In person filings may also be made as needed. Upon receipt of filings, the court will be in communication with the filing party to arrange the date and time of the proceeding. If you have concerns about the communication, or if you wish to contact the court regarding scheduling, feel free to contact the court at:

Email: 7dc@vbco.org
Phone: (269) 657-8222

3. Civil Infractions / Tickets
 - a. Extended appearance / to pay dates will be set 90 days out from citation.

G. Probate Court

1. All matters
 - a. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding remote appearance.
 - b. Filings – Filings must be made with the probate court clerk’s office by email, mail, or by using the drop box near the court entrance. In person filings may also be made as needed. Upon receipt of filings, the court will be in communication with the filing party to arrange the date and time of the proceeding. If you have concerns about the communication, or if you wish to contact the court regarding scheduling, feel free to contact the court at:
Email: probate@vbco.org
Phone: (269) 657-8225
2. GAL Reviews
 - a. All supervision of wards will be conducted remotely using electronic communication. This includes face-to-face visits.
 - b. Visits to health/residential care facilities are limited due to [Executive Order 2020-136](#).

H. Specialty Court

1. Court sessions will be held remotely during the term of this plan. Judges will communicate electronically with participants as a group.
2. Client contacts and supervision may be in person or held remotely.
3. If you have an emergency, you can contact the specialty court office at:
Email: specialtycourts@vbco.org
Phone: (269) 657-8200 ext. 2478

FORMS

- [VBC-0001 How to Join a Virtual Court Proceeding Using Zoom](#)
- [VBC-2004 Court Recording Request Form](#)
- [VBC-0049 Guidelines for Virtual Hearings in Van Buren County Court](#)

Effective Date: 9/23/2020

Date: 9/23/2020

Chief Judge Signature: 