

County Court at Law, Hon. Jason Ellis  
County Court at Law No. 2., Hon. Taylor Heaton  
County Court at Law No. 3., Hon. Floyd Getz



**SMITH COUNTY COURTS AT LAW  
JOINT STATEMENT REGARDING HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERNS**

The Smith County Courts at Law recognize the concern about a potential outbreak of COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus). The health and safety of employees, attorneys, litigants, and the public remain a paramount concern. The county courts are doing their part to address these concerns in the following manner.

**These guidelines are effective from March 16, 2020, until April 13, 2020.**

**1. If a Person is Sick**

Everyone who is sick or who thinks they have been exposed to COVID-19 should contact the court to reschedule their hearings or trials.

**2. Non-Essential Court Matters are Rescheduled**

Unless a case is designated below as an Essential Court Matter, all in-person hearings and trials will be rescheduled during the time this order is in effect. Essential Court Matters will proceed. **You must contact each court regarding each setting.**

**3. Essential Court Matters Defined**

A. Any suits or hearings with jurisdictional deadlines

B. Family law cases (including IV-D court):

- i. Texas Family Code Title 4 – protective orders and family violence
- ii. Texas Family Code Chapter 157, Subchapter H – habeas corpus and writs of attachment for children
- iii. Texas Family Code Chapters 261-263 – child welfare suits filed by the government

- iv. Texas Family Code Chapter 157 enforcements, only if a respondent is in custody
- vi. Emergency relief – after reviewing an affidavit, the court may decide to set a hearing on a motion for emergency relief

C. Criminal Cases

- i. Plea hearings and dispositive hearings for incarcerated defendants
- ii. Writs of habeas corpus and bond reduction hearings
- iii. Any dispositive hearing where a defendant has requested a speedy trial or speedy disposition
- iv. Any time-sensitive hearing required to be conducted by an Appellate Court
- v. If you have additional matters you deem essential, please contact the particular court where your case is pending to determine how the issue will be handled.

D. Civil Cases:

- i. Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Chapter 7A protective orders
- ii. Temporary restraining orders and temporary injunctions

E. Juvenile cases:

- i. Detention hearings for detained juveniles
- ii. Adjudication and disposition hearings or modification hearings
- iii. Any dispositive hearing where a defendant has requested a speedy trial or speedy disposition
- iv. Any time-sensitive hearing required to be conducted by an Appellate Court
- v. If you have additional matters you deem essential, please contact the juvenile court to determine how the issue will be handled.

F. Any other matters that may be designated by a court at its discretion

**4. No Jury Trials**

The Smith County Courts at Law will not be calling any jury trials during the time this order is in effect.

**5. Uncontested Matters by Submission Only**

Beginning immediately, no uncontested matters will be heard. All agreed orders and matters that can be heard by submission should be electronically filed.

**6. Contact the Courts**

If you have any questions, please email the court coordinator.

SIGNED on 3/16/2020

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'T. B. Heaton', written over a horizontal line.

HONORABLE TAYLOR B. HEATON  
Local Administrative County Court at Law Judge  
On behalf of the Smith County Courts at Law