

26TH DISTRICT COURT PROCEDURES
FOR CIVIL CASES DURING
COVID-19 DISASTER

Effective March 24, 2020

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the state of disaster declared by the Governor, the Stay Home Stay Safe Order issued by Williamson County and the Emergency Orders that have been issued by the Supreme Court of Texas,¹ and to protect the due process rights and public health of all citizens, the 26th District Court has suspended in-person hearings until at least May 11, 2020 and all jury trials until at least June 1, 2020. In the interim, hearings may be conducted via Microsoft Teams video conference application as deemed necessary by the Court. For specific instructions on obtaining and using the Team App, see **Hearing Procedure and How To's below**.

All in-person hearings and jury trials currently scheduled during this state of disaster are hereby postponed and will be rescheduled. Contact the Court to reset your case to a date after May 11, 2020. **It should be noted that this date is subject to being extended as conditions change. All updates will be posted on the 26th Judicial District Court webpage.** <https://www.wilco.org/Elected-Officials/District-Courts/26th-District-Court>

Attorneys and litigants are strongly encouraged to continue to diligently work their cases in order to reach an agreement or otherwise prepare for trial. To that end, and to ensure the civil justice system functions as efficiently as possible under the circumstances, lawyers and litigants may request telephonic or video hearings to resolve their disputes. Submission requests will be considered for all uncontested matters.

- a. All pleadings must first be filed and accepted by the district clerk's office before requesting a hearing.
- b. The court will determine whether to grant a requested hearing and the procedures for introducing evidence.
- c. If approved, requested hearings announcing less than 1 hour will be heard on Tuesday mornings of each week. Approved hearing requests announcing for more than 1 hour will be heard on Wednesday mornings. To request a hearing via Microsoft Teams application, contact court administrator, Deb Lewis, at 512-943-1226 or by email at dlewis@wilco.org.
- d. Some matters may be considered upon written submission. Written submission requests must include any affidavits, declarations or other necessary supporting records. This method is encouraged for all agreed motions and orders, as well as for non-testimonial matters. After receiving a submission hearing request, court staff will then advise whether any further communication or briefing will be required from any party.

HEARING PROCEDURE

In the event a Teams hearing or meeting is scheduled, you will receive an email with a calendar invitation to the meeting. Counsel may access Microsoft Teams to join a meeting anytime, from any device, with or without a Microsoft Teams account.

- a. The court administrator will send a Teams Hearing/Meeting invitation at least 24 hours in advance of the setting to the following distribution list:
 - i. Attorneys for all respective parties
 - ii. The Judge, and
 - iii. The Court Reporter
 - iv. Any designated parties or witnesses. Plaintiff and Defense Counsel must provide a list with email addresses of each side's respective participants at least two business days prior to the scheduled hearing
- b. All anticipated exhibits shall be provided via email to all parties prior to commencement of the hearing, including the Judge and Court Reporter
- c. All proposed orders shall be efiled one business day prior to the commencement of the hearing
- d. At the appointed time, all invitees will join the meeting by selecting the link provided
- e. Documents may be uploaded via Teams for reference and consideration during the hearing
- f. The Hearing will take place, the Judge will sign necessary orders electronically and forward to the District Clerk's office

HOW TO'S

- a. To join Microsoft Teams as a guest: You will receive an email from the Court with a link to "Join Microsoft Teams Meeting." Click on this link
- b. It will bring you to a webpage where you can choose to "Download the Teams App" or "Join on the Web." You can choose either one
 - i. If you are on a desktop computer, "Join on the Web" is easiest. Note: You must use Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge as your web-browser to use Teams on the web
 - ii. If you are using a mobile device, downloading the Teams App is easiest
- c. It will ask you to allow Teams to use your Audio and Video from your computer (you must have a camera and a microphone), and it will ask you to type in your name and click "Join Now"
- d. This will place you in the "Lobby" for the Videoconference to begin
- e. The person coordinating the call will let you into the Videoconference once it begins. Please be advised that the call may be recorded by the Court or Court Staff for record purposes

¹ The Supreme Court of Texas orders can be found at <https://www.txcourts.gov/supreme/news/texas-supreme-court-coronavirus-update/>.