

**STATE OF MAINE  
DISTRICT COURT**

**Order Regarding Child Protection Proceedings**

**March 18, 2020**

The Maine Judicial Branch continues to monitor the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The following procedures for child protection proceedings will apply, effective March 18, 2020, and until further order of the court:

1. The court will hold a summary preliminary hearing on a preliminary protection order as required by 22 M.R.S. § 4034(4). The court may waive the hearing on the preliminary protection order if the custodian consents, but the custodian's consent must be voluntarily and knowingly executed in court before a judge. (This could be conducted by video provided that video participation is sufficient to comport with due process requirements.)

2. The court will hold hearings on a jeopardy order petition within 120 days of the filing of the child protection proceeding. If the hearing is contested, the court will be held in-person at the court. (This could be conducted by video provided that video participation is sufficient to comport with due process requirements.) The court will consider requests to have witnesses testify telephonically on a witness-by-witness basis. If the hearing is uncontested and the parties plan to agree to jeopardy findings, the court will accept their agreement telephonically or by video. The AAG must send an email to the clerk, copying all counsel and the GAL, indicating that the jeopardy order petition is uncontested and to arrange for the telephonic or video proceeding. The court, in its own discretion, reserves the right to require parties to appear in person.

3. The court will hold judicial reviews at least once every 6 months following the issuance of a jeopardy order. Contested judicial reviews will be held in-person at the court or by video or telephonically if available. The court may, in its discretion, elect to review the case in writing without a hearing, if the judicial review is not contested and the parties submit the agreed to judicial review order in advance of the scheduled judicial review.

4. Hearings on petitions to terminate parental rights will be deferred until further order.

5. To the extent possible, the court will hold case management conferences and docket calls telephonically.

6. All child protective case filings will be accepted by email sent to the Clerk, copied to all counsel and the GAL. Paper copies must also be sent to the court, all counsel and the GAL. Clerks will provide email addresses to all parties.

SO ORDERED.

Dated: March 18, 2020

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Susan Sparaco, Chief Judge  
Maine District Court

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Jed French, Deputy Chief Judge  
Maine District Court