



JUDICIARY OF GUAM

Administrative Office of the Courts
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HON. F. PHILIP CARBULLIDO
CHIEF JUSTICE

HON. ALBERTO C. LAMORENA III
PRESIDING JUDGE

KRISTINA L. BAIRD
ADMINISTRATOR OF THE COURTS

The Judiciary of Guam: Access to Justice in Pandemic Times

The Judiciary of Guam (“Judiciary”) is committed to the fair and effective administration of justice for all persons. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to profoundly affect our lives – both personal and professional, and the health and safety of our families and community are of the utmost concern. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed unprecedented pressure on government, the private sector, and civil society. Courts across the country -- including the Judiciary -- have collaborated, identifying ways to remain open to provide essential services to the public. This includes ensuring that cases involving the constitutional rights of individuals and the safety of the public continue to be prioritized by the courts.

To ensure the protection of the public’s health and safety, and the community’s access to justice amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court of Guam (“Supreme Court”) issued several Administrative Orders consistent with implementing judicial administration best practices in times of crisis. These Supreme Court Administrative Orders called for the continued provision of Judiciary essential services, the postponement of non-essential court matters, and the deferring of payment of filing fees until May 6, 2020, or until further order by the Supreme Court. The Judiciary continues to conduct court hearings remotely or virtually utilizing various technology platforms, to include video conferencing or teleconferencing capabilities. Where in-person hearings are required, the Judiciary has implemented procedures to protect the health and safety of Judiciary patrons and employees present in the courtroom.

Since the State of Emergency declared by *I Maga’haga Guahan* in Executive Order No. 2020-03 on March 14, 2020, and the closure by *I Maga’haga Guahan* in Executive Order No. 2020-04 of non-essential government operations beginning March 16, 2020, the Judiciary, under the Supreme Court Administrative Orders, has held 206 court hearings presided by judges or judicial officers. These include hearings in criminal cases such as magistrate, bail, pretrial and probation violation, and return of warrant hearings. After the declaration of the State of Emergency and during the week that followed, the Judiciary continued to hold grand jury proceedings involving criminal matters until issuing the Supreme Court Administrative Order on March 22, suspending jury activities.

Hearings have also been conducted in juvenile cases involving child protection, foster care, juvenile guardianships, and juvenile delinquency. Hearings have been held in domestic cases, adult guardianship cases, and in civil cases involving civil protection orders and COVID-19 petitions. Urgent or “ex parte” matters have also been heard by judges or judicial officers concerning criminal, civil and juvenile matters.



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Filing documents with the Supreme Court and the Superior Court of Guam (“Superior Court”) has not been suspended and remains accessible to the public. The Superior Court Clerk's Office continues to receive and process all court filings submitted by the parties via email, facsimile or drop box. To date, over 1,000 court filings by attorneys, agencies, and self-represented litigants have been processed by the Superior Court Clerk’s Office. Decisions, orders and judgments have been and continue to be issued by judges or judicial officers in various types of cases.

Besides hearings being conducted and the processing of court filings, the Superior Court Clerk's Office continues to receive and respond to requests for services from Judiciary patrons, including attorneys and other members of the public, via email or telephone. These services provided by the Superior Court Clerk’s Office include case record requests, background research requests for employers, court clearances, traffic clearances, online traffic payments, and posting of bail payments.

The Judiciary of Guam is steadfastly committed to providing access to justice for all persons, even during pandemic times. Contrary to the article published earlier this week stating that the Judiciary was closed, the Judiciary has and continues to remain open during these challenging times within the limitations of the Governor’s Executive Orders. Should any members of the public have questions regarding Judiciary services and the Supreme Court Administrative Orders relative to the COVID-19 pandemic, information is available on the Judiciary of Guam website at: <http://www.guamsupremecourt.com/>.

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Judiciary of Guam