



# BELIZE PRESS OFFICE

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## PRESS RELEASE

### **The Judiciary of Belize – Response to COVID-19 Preventative Measures**

*Belmopan. March 27, 2020 – 6:30 p.m.*

The World Health Organization has declared the threat of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) to be a global pandemic and The Ministry of Health has mandated early intervention measures to address the seriousness of the pandemic.

In light of the Belize Press Office, Press Release dated March 26, 2020, the Judiciary is taking measures and implementing strategies to safeguard the health and safety of judicial officers, officers of the court, staff members, and the general public, while at the same time maintaining a functioning judicial system and access to justice.

The following measures will apply to the courts and offices of the Supreme Court of Belize, the Magistrate Court countrywide, the Family Courts countrywide, and the General Registry Office.

#### **SUPREME COURT - CRIMINAL CASES**

1. All jury trials are suspended with immediate effect until further notice, and all jurors are excused.
2. Video link conferencing will be utilized whenever possible for bail hearings and adjournments for persons on remand.
3. Where persons must attend court in person, the guidelines with regards to gatherings and social distancing will be enforced.

## **SUPREME COURT - CIVIL CASES**

4. Urgent applications to the court will be addressed remotely or by written submissions.
5. Except for urgent applications to the court, hearings and trials for civil matters are suspended with immediate effect until further notice.
6. Where persons must attend court in person, the guidelines with regards to gatherings and social distancing will be enforced.

## **MAGISTRATE'S COURT**

7. Arraignments of persons charged will be conducted daily by a Magistrate.
8. Adjournment dates for persons attending court may be given by telephone or email.
9. Where persons must attend court in person, the guidelines with regards to gatherings and social distancing will be enforced.
10. Any queries or concerns can be addressed to [magistratecourtbz@gmail.com](mailto:magistratecourtbz@gmail.com) or by calling 227-7164.

## **FAMILY COURT**

11. Only urgent applications/cases in the family court will be addressed.
12. Where persons must attend court in person, the guidelines with regards to gatherings and social distancing will be enforced.
13. Any queries or concerns can be addressed to [famcourt@btl.net](mailto:famcourt@btl.net), or by calling 227-4107.

## **GENERAL**

14. Practice Directions with more detailed information will be issued and enforced to reflect compliance with the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and the official Government Press Releases.

## **GENERAL REGISTRY**

1. The amount of persons allowed in the Registry office has been restricted, implementing the guideline on gatherings and social distancing.
2. Persons at the cashier window will be allowed one at a time.
3. A Drop box is stationed at the entrance of the main office to facilitating the dropping off of documents, hence minimizing the amount of persons gathered at the office. Specific Guidelines are to be followed thereafter.
4. The Law Library will be closed until further notice.
5. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been installed in the offices and courtroom for courts users.
6. Any queries or concerns can be addressed to [info@belizejudiciary.gov](mailto:info@belizejudiciary.gov), or by calling 227-7377.

These measures are in effect from March 27, 2020 until further notice.

**Ends**