



OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION

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Administrative Director

ATTORNEYS AND STAFF UNDER STAY-AT-HOME ORDERS Travel Authorization

Revised: April 2, 2020

Legal services are essential to the justice system, which is itself essential to the people. In its "Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce," the United States Department of Homeland Security has identified "workers supporting the operations of the judicial system" as essential workers. As officers of the courts, lawyers, as well as their necessary staff, support the operations of the judicial system and are therefore essential workers. As DHS has recognized, the need for certain legal services only increases in a disaster like the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Consistent with Governor Abbott's Executive Order GA-14 (March 31, 2020) requiring even essential services to be provided through remote telework from home unless they cannot be provided remotely, lawyers should lead by example by working in ways that, for themselves, staff, clients, and others, encourage remote telework, practice and implement social distancing, avoid groups larger than permitted by local, state, or national authorities, and encourage good hygiene, environmental cleanliness, and sanitation throughout the workplace. Lawyers and their staff must work from home if possible and provide all services from home unless the services cannot be provided through remote telework. Lawyers may not engage in activities merely for convenience or personal preference when other means, such as telephoning, tele- or video-conferencing, and online meetings or online court proceedings, are available.

Lawyers providing essential legal services must be permitted to practice law free from stay-at-home orders and other restrictions on travel and business practices when remote telework is not possible. In these situations, lawyers and staff may travel and engage in activities necessary to provide legal services, as is permitted for other essential services including essential government services. Lawyers and staff may travel to and attend court proceedings, depositions, and meetings with clients and others if the services cannot be provided through remote telework. Stay-at-home and similar orders do not prohibit such travel and activities involved in the practice of law as long as every effort is made to provide services through telework when possible and to avoid risks to the public health.

Certified by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Slayton".

David Slayton
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Texas Office of Court Administration