RE: Centex Child Protection Courts Procedures for Electronic Non-Essential Hearings
Beginning April 14, 2020

With the issuance of the State of Emergency by the Governor, the Texas Supreme Court has issued several emergency orders that prohibit in person appearances for any court hearing that is non-essential. Non-essential hearings for the Child Protection Courts are all hearings other than the initial removal hearings or hearings seeking or enforcing injunctive relief. In accordance with the emergency orders, Centex Child Protection Courts will conduct all non-essential hearing utilizing the Zoom application to conduct virtual court hearings. The Zoom application is free to download and compatible with smart phones or any electronic device equipped with a camera or microphone. (For additional technical information on Zoom, visit the Office of Court Administration website https://www.txcourts.gov/programs-services/electronic-hearings-with-zoom/).

Centex Child Protection Courts 1&2 will conduct essential and non-essential Zoom hearings utilizing the following procedures:

1. The online court dockets will continue to reflect the current settings. (http://cpdockets.txcourts.gov/courts.aspx) All Final Hearings shall be reset to a later date that will allow in person appearances. Any agreements for final orders are acceptable and may be e-filed for consideration at any time. Status Review Hearings will be conducted by submission for the approval of the Family Service Plans. Respondents must file a response to the Status Report to make the Court aware of any objections to the Family Service Plans. No other issues will be considered at the Status Review Hearing. Any additional issues must be set separately for further Temporary Hearing with notice to all parties.

2. All Show Cause Hearings shall continue to be heard in Court #1 at 9 a.m. (Parties are allowed to appear in person but it is not required. If you wish to participate telephonically, please contact the Court Coordinator to advise the Court.)

3. Court #2 shall conduct non-essential Zoom hearings beginning at 9 a.m. Court #1 shall conduct non-essential Zoom hearings beginning at 1 p.m. The Court Coordinator shall send all attorneys the Zoom meeting invitation link via e-mail for the Court appearance. It is the attorneys responsibility to share the link with clients and any/all witnesses. All parties may participate by Zoom or the Attorney for the party may participate by Zoom with his or her client present on the attorney's telephone. If the parties do not require a hearing or submit a written Rule 11 Agreement for orders, the agreements will be accepted in lieu of the hearing.

4. Any evidence must be electronically filed prior to the hearing. These documents may be submitted as attachments to the Hearing Report or as attachments to the Response to the Hearing Report filed by the Respondents or any Intervening Party.

5. Zoom hearings will be recorded by the Court and live streamed to the public via YouTube. In accordance with local rules, no other recording of the hearing is authorized and remains prohibited. For a YouTube directory please go to https://txcourts.gov/programs-services/electronic-hearings-with-zoom/youtube-channel-directory/