

March 19, 2020

To: York County Bar

From: Kevin Brackett, Solicitor, 16th Judicial Circuit

Re: Scheduling of General Sessions court dates during COVID-19 crisis

Until things are back to normal again, we will be using a call-in system (much like the call-in system for jurors currently used by the Clerk of Court) to notify defendants of upcoming court dates. Effective 12:01 a.m. March 23rd, Instead of being given court dates at their bond hearing, defendants will be given 1) a Court Notification Telephone Number to call; 2) they will be assigned a group number based on their arrest date; and 3) they will be given a date on which they must call the Court Notification Telephone Number. See the attached schedule for a listing of groups by arrest date. This will apply to ALL cases. **The call-in number for General Sessions is 803-253-6534.** The first message will be available on May 1st after 8 am.

When they call the first time on the assigned date, the Court Notification message may tell Group 1 to report on May 25th at 8:30, for instance. Or, the message may tell all in Group 1 that they have no upcoming court date assigned yet, and they need to call back the next Friday. It is foreseeable that defendants may be calling every Friday for some time before a reporting date is on the Court Notification Message. This will depend on when the coronavirus crisis is over.

Information about which group a defendant falls into for those individuals released on bond after December 29th but prior to March 23rd can be found on our office [webpage](#) starting Monday, March 23rd. The phone number to call to receive court scheduling updates will also be available there. Lists will be provided to the Clerk of Court and the security detail at the main entrance to the Moss Justice Center so any defendants who unknowingly appears for court can be apprised of how to stay informed on future case scheduling.

For defendants arrested before December 30th, 2019, we will continue to docket those defendants as we have in the past. These defendants have already had their bond returnable date so the call-in system will not apply to them. **Until the court system is back to normal, we will not be docketing or expecting any defendants to appear in court unless an emergency necessitates it.**

Please advise your clients that until they are either docketed or their group is assigned a report date, they do not need to report to court regardless of what their bond paperwork says.

We are continuing to do pleas and bond hearings for those being held in the detention center. We have limited those in the courtroom to the bare minimum. We have a skeleton crew in the office, but all attorneys not in the office are working remotely from home, have access to all their files digitally and will continue to work cases and send out discovery as we receive it for those defendants who are represented and have requested it. They are available to talk to you about your client's case via email or by phone.