

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER
(COVID-19 CHILD VISITATION AND SUPPORT)
MARCH 26, 2020**

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) characterized Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) as a pandemic due to its severity and rapid global spread. President Donald Trump has declared a National State of Emergency. Governor Kay Ivey has declared a State of Emergency for Alabama. Several counties and cities have declared a State of Emergency. The State Health Officer has closed all schools and universities. The Supreme Court of Alabama has suspended all in-person court proceedings until April 16, 2020, with the exception of certain emergency issues involving the health and welfare of children, Protection Orders and essential constitutional duties of the Court.

Due to the wide spread of the COVID-19 virus, the Judges of the 3rd Judicial Circuit have determined that an Administrative Order is necessary to address the issues of visitation of children with parents and others during this time of emergency to protect the health and welfare of the minor children that are the subject of Custody Orders issued by the courts of the 3rd Judicial Circuit.

The paramount concern of the courts is the best interest of the minor children that are the subject of existing Custody and Visitation Orders/Judgments.

The Court is aware that all persons should be complying with social distancing and that going back and forth between two (2) households creates a problem of children staying healthy. Each household is operated differently. Some parents may be required to continue to work outside of the home in a high-risk area. The Court is aware that certain minor children have existing health issues that creates additional risks to their health.

In consideration of the extraordinary circumstances that currently exist, it is **ORDERED** as follows:

1. That the parties with the existing Custody and Visitation Orders shall communicate with each other to discuss visitation and access with the minor child and shall seek to make visitation and access decisions regarding the best interest of the minor children. The adult parties and parents are the people that should be the most willing to make decisions regarding the best interest of the minor children.

2. That in person visitation is stayed by either parent or party that is residing in an area that has been designated as “shelter in home” or similar designation due to Coronavirus.
3. That Spring Break is defined and means the break that is designated on the school system calendar where the minor children are enrolled.
4. That should the parties fail to agree on visitation and access while the Administrative Order is in place then all in person visitation is stayed.
5. That during the period of stay, each party shall make reasonable effort to allow access and visitation by telephone or other electronic means such as Skype, Facetime, Google hangout or Zoom. Many conferencing applications are available free of charge.
6. That if any party required to pay child support has been or becomes unemployed or unable to work due to sickness or business closings related to COVID-19, any requirement to pay child support is stayed until April 16, 2020 or if extended to a new date. In any action of contempt for failing to pay child support the person responsible to pay child support would be required to provide proof of unemployment or lack of ability to work due to sickness or business closing related to Coronavirus. The party responsible for maintaining medical insurance on the minor child shall maintain said coverage or risk of finding of contempt and a Judgment for all uninsured medical expenses.

In these unprecedented times, the adult parties and parents are encouraged to work together and be the parents and/or custodians that will promote the welfare and safety of the minor children.

Done this 26th day of March, 2020.

/s/Burt Smithart
Burt Smithart
Presiding Circuit Judge

/s/J. Matt Horne
J. Matt Horne
Barbour County District Judge

/s/L. Cooper Rutland
L. Cooper Rutland
Bullock County District Judge