

**TRIAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS
HOUSING COURT DEPARTMENT**

**STANDING ORDER 3-20: SUPPLEMENT TO HOUSING COURT STANDING ORDER
2-20 RELATING TO THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) OUTBREAK**

Consistent with the Supreme Judicial Court's March 17, 2020 Order limiting in-person appearances in court to emergency matters that cannot be resolved through a videoconference or telephonic hearing (the "SJC Order"), the Chief Justice of the Housing Court, pursuant to his statutory authority under G.L. c. 211B, § 10 and G.L. c. 185C, § 8A, hereby promulgates this Standing Order for the Housing Court Department. This Order is intended to supplement Housing Court Standing Order 2-20, to the extent the latter is not inconsistent with this Order. This Order is temporary and is subject to be modified or rescinded at any time, as necessary to address the fluctuating circumstances arising from the coronavirus pandemic.

1. All Housing Court divisions shall remain open during regular business hours and, at least until April 6, 2020, shall hear only emergency matters. Where appropriate, such matters shall be heard telephonically or through video conferencing. "Emergency matters" in the Housing Court include the following circumstances: applications for injunctive relief, temporary restraining orders where a complaint involves a lockout, condemnation, no heat, no water, and/or no utilities; conduct and or conditions endangering the health safety and welfare of residential occupants and others; stay of levy on an execution; or where access is required to address an emergency (e.g., burst water pipe, gas fumes, etc.). Where appropriate, the Clerk-Magistrate of each division, in consultation with the respective First Justice, shall otherwise have the discretion to determine whether a matter is an "emergency" and merits immediate hearing. Where possible, all attorneys and litigants shall provide the Clerk's Office with their respective contact information, including an e-mail address and telephone number.
2. The First Justice and Clerk-Magistrate of each division, or their designee, shall designate essential staffing levels for specific days and times; (2) conduct hearings by videoconference or telephone; and (3) determine how judicial decisions will be communicated and served.
3. Pursuant to Paragraphs 9 and 10 of the SJC Order, (1) all executions for possession and money judgments; and (2) all deadlines set forth in statutes or court rules, standing orders, or guidelines that would otherwise expire before April 21, 2020, are extended to that date, unless otherwise ordered by the court.

SO ORDERED.

/s/Timothy F. Sullivan

Timothy F. Sullivan, Chief Justice, Housing Court Department

Date: March 17, 2020