

## **Justice of the Peace Court Re-opening Plan for Civil Locations**

All The Justice of the Peace Court civil court locations will open June 15, 2020 with some changes to their usual operations:

- All visitors will be screened by Court Security Officers for COVID-19 symptoms
  - The Court will provide anyone denied entrance with information on how to contact the court
- Social distancing will limit the number of persons allowed in court lobbies and courtrooms
- The Court is testing ways to conduct virtual proceedings using apps like Skype and Zoom to speed the processing of cases and reduce the need for litigants to appear in court
  - You may be offered the chance to appear before a judge online
- The Court is exploring new ways to resolve cases without appearing in court, including online dispute resolution (ODR) and alternative dispute resolution (ADR)
  - The Court will provide more information after evaluating these processes
  - Please check our website, <https://www.courts.delaware.gov/locations/jpcourt>, for updates

Civil court locations will address the following case types received before and during the court shutdown:

- Debt
- Trespass
- Replevin
- Abandoned property
- Garagekeeper
- Execution – Levies and Constable Sales

Delayed cases will be rescheduled. Depending on the case type, plaintiffs may have to re-advertise sales notices and process may be re-served by constables. The Court will inquire if parties wish to use video and assess their technological capability to participate online. Offers to conduct video proceedings may be made.

Landlord-Tenant cases and Writs of Possession are on hold due to the Governor's emergency order limiting evictions and summary possession. Once the Governor lifts or amends the emergency order the Court will:

- Contact parties on delayed cases to verify their intent to proceed and possibly use video
- Require landlords to provide documentation to show that their property is not subject to the federal moratorium on evictions created by the CARES Act of 2020
- Schedule cases - oldest cases first
- Accept and process all Writs of Possession

Schedules for other cases types may be delayed once Landlord-Tenant cases are processed.

The Court will notify parties in delayed cases of any action they need to take. Parties should contact the Court location handling their case if they have any questions.