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44th Judicial Circuit

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FROM: Leslie A. Baker, Prosecuting Attorney
SUBJECT: COVID-19 Precautions Press Release
DATE: March 23, 2020 at 2:00 p.m.

The COVID-19 virus has been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), and the President of the United States of America has declared a National State of Emergency. In addition, Governor Holcomb has formally declared a "Stay-at-Home" Order limiting unnecessary travel that goes into effect on March 25, 2020 and will remain in effect until April 7, 2020. Further, the Starke County Commissioner's have put measures in place to keep Starke County employees safe by closing several offices and limiting the number of employees in others.

With that in mind, the Starke County Prosecutor's Office intends to exercise an over-abundance of caution and be overly cautious in addressing this virus. The best way to prevent illness, especially this one, is to avoid being exposed. The virus is believed to be spread, mainly, from person-to-person contact with those who are in close contact with one another. In order to limit the spread of the virus, the Starke County Prosecutor's Office will close to the public effective March 24, 2020. This includes the criminal division and child support division.

This closure means the following:

1. Any reference herein to "the Prosecutor's Office" includes both the criminal division as well as the child support division of the Prosecutor's Office.
2. The Prosecutor's Office will be closed to the public (that means anyone other than employees working in the Starke County Prosecutor's Office or law enforcement officers) effective Tuesday, March 24, 2020 until Wednesday, April 7, 2020. This decision will be revisited prior to that date.
3. During this time period, the Prosecutor's Office will operate on modified office hours from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm Monday through Friday, with limited staff in the office. We are available by telephone and email. Staff will also be working remotely, and will be available through means of email. Telephone calls and/or voicemails will be returned as quickly as possible. Any and all essential contact with the public that can be conducted over telephone or email will be conducted in that manner.



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4. Any in person meeting or appointment will be rescheduled to a date after April 7, 2020.
5. Any and all court appearances as required by Circuit Court Judge Kim Hall, Circuit Court Magistrate Jeanene Calabrese, and Knox City Court Charles Hasnerl will be attended by the Starke County Prosecutor's Office, but may be attended telephonically if permitted by the Court.
6. Any an all appointments or meetings that are currently scheduled to take place in the Prosecutor's Office April 7, 2020 are now CANCELLED.
7. Appointments and meetings shall be rescheduled at a later date.
8. On April 7, 2020, this situation will be reassessed by my Office using the current information from health care experts and those in the infectious disease profession.
9. A copy of this release shall be posted on the front door of the Prosecutor's Officer as well as the Child Support Division of the Prosecutor's Office.

On behalf of the Starke County Prosecutor's Office, I apologize for any inconvenience these precautionary measures may cause. Based upon information received, I believe this is a responsible, and proactive response to the spread of COVID-19 in an effort to protect our staff and the public, while ensuring the continued function of the Starke County Prosecutor's Office.

My apologies for any inconvenience experienced during this time.

/S/ Leslie A. Baker
Leslie A. Baker
Starke County Prosecutor