

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT,
FOR THE STATE OF FLORIDA**

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER: A-2020-27

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER REGARDING COURT ORDERED SUPERVISED
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES VISITATION DURING THE PUBLIC
HEALTH EMERGENCY RELATED TO COVID-19 AND VACATING
ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER A-2020-18**

WHEREAS, Pursuant to Article V, section 2(d) of the Florida Constitution, and section 43.26, Florida Statutes, the Chief Judge of each judicial circuit is charged with the authority and the power to do everything necessary to promote the prompt and efficient administration of justice, and;

WHEREAS, Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.215(b)(3) states the Chief Judge “shall, considering available resources, ensure the efficient and proper administration of all courts within this circuit,” and;

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and the Florida Department of Health advise precautions due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak specifically noting that the best way to prevent illness is to avoid exposure to the virus by social distancing, and;

WHEREAS, on March 1, 2020, Governor Ron DeSantis declared a State of Emergency due to the COVID-19 outbreak, and on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, and;

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2020, Chief Justice Charles Canady issued Administrative Order No. AOSC20-12, *In Re: Response of the Florida State Courts System to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)*, requiring Chief Judges to continue ongoing planning and authorizing the use of mitigating measures to address the effects of COVID-19, and;

WHEREAS, on March 16, 2020, Chief Judge Daniel B. Merritt, Jr. issued Administrative Order No. A-2020-12, “*Administrative Order Regarding Court Closure Due to COVID-19 Pandemic*,” that closed all non-essential Courts through Friday, March 27, 2020, and;

WHEREAS, on March 17, 2020 Chief Justice Charles A. Canady issued Florida Supreme Court Administrative Order AOSC20-15 *In Re: COVID-19 Essential and Critical Trial Court Proceedings* wherein the Court identified specific essential court proceedings, and;

WHEREAS, pursuant to Florida Statute Section 39.4085(16) the Court is authorized to order supervised visitation in dependency matters, and;

WHEREAS, based on the declaration of a state of emergency there is now a growing concern for the health and safety of visitation supervisors, parents, and the children of Fifth Judicial Circuit who participate in the court ordered supervised Department of Children and Families visitation, and;

WHEREAS, on March 23, 2020 the undersigned entered Administrative Order A-2020-18. Subsequently, the Florida Supreme Court entered Administrative Order SCAO20-18 which addressed the same issues.

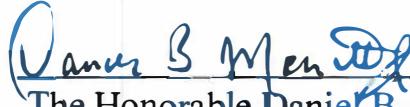
IT IS THEREFORE,

ORDERED and **ADJUDGED** as follows:

1. All in-person court ordered supervised Department of Children and Families visitations are to be conducted in compliance with Florida Supreme Court Administrative Order SCAO20-18. Administrative Order A-2020-18 is hereby vacated.
2. The Department of Children and Families is instructed to collect information related to electronic supervised visitations that occur each week and report on a weekly basis, starting on Friday March 27, 2019 and on each Friday thereafter for the duration of the suspension of in-person visitation, the following:
 - a. The number of visitations conducted via the use of electronic communication and the type of electronic communication used.
 - b. The number of in-person visitations not conducted and the reason why the electronic visitation did not occur.
3. Reports must be submitted in writing to the General Counsel of the Fifth Judicial Circuit at the following email address: jfuller@circuit5.org.

4. Additional orders modifying these measures will be issued as warranted by changing circumstances during the public health emergency.

DONE and **ORDERED** in Chambers at Brooksville, Hernando County, Florida this 10th day of June, 2020.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel B. Merritt, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Honorable Daniel B. Merritt, Jr.
Chief Judge
Fifth Judicial Circuit