

**PRESS RELEASE**

March 13, 2020

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CLOSURE OF COURTS ISLANDWIDE**

KINGSTON, Jamaica – Courts islandwide were closed at 1’oclock this afternoon to allow staff members time to make provisions for their families, especially their children, given the sudden closure of schools and the local transmission of the coronavirus.

The decision follows a meeting held this morning involving Chief Justice the Honourable Mr. Justice Bryan Sykes OJ, CD and representatives from the Disaster Response Committee, the Jamaican Bar Associations, the Jamaica Constabulary Force, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Department of Correctional Services.

Courts will reopen on Monday, March 16, 2020.

They also agreed on additional protocols for the operations of the court with immediate effect.

**Court of Appeal**

- Beginning Monday March 16, 2020, all in-chamber hearings will be done by telephone. The Registrar at the Court of Appeal will be in contact with the attorneys and the logistics worked out for this to be done.
- All open court matters will proceed as scheduled. Only those persons who must be present in court should be allowed on the buildings.

**Home Circuit and Circuit Courts**

- All Jury trials currently underway are to be completed within the shortest possible time, certainly by Friday, March 20, 2020. No new jury trials are to begin in the next fourteen (14) days. This will be reassessed after fourteen (14) days and further information provided.

- In the event some defendants do not present themselves for court, a warrant is to be issued and execution stayed for up to five (5) months.
- We also take this opportunity to remind you that the Coronavirus Sensitization Sessions will continue in our courts next week
- Discussions are ongoing with the Jamaica Constabulary Force and the Department of Correctional Services with the intention of facilitating bail and case management hearings electronically.
- Persons entering our court offices will now be required to sanitise their hands.
- Sanitisers are to be placed in close proximity to high-touch areas including counters.
- Staff members are to sanitise hands after processing each customer
- Office attendants are to clean high-touch areas and surfaces hourly during the work day
- The handing out of numbers at all court offices should cease until further notice
- Members of the public are encouraged to take their own pens to sign documents
- A member of staff will walk the floors to ensure persons are quickly process to reduce crowds in our lobby areas.
- All persons who interact with members of the public are to wear gloves and to change those as often as possible
- Maintain a distance of one meter (1m) while interacting with members of the public
- Persons exhibiting flu-like symptoms are encouraged to go home immediately and keep in constant communication with supervisors.
- Members of the public exhibiting flu-like symptoms are to be politely turned away from the courts after collecting the requisite information to facilitate the updating of their court files to reflect same.

Please visit our websites: [www.supremecourt.gov.jm](http://www.supremecourt.gov.jm), [www.cad.gov.jm](http://www.cad.gov.jm) and [www.parishcourt.gov.jm](http://www.parishcourt.gov.jm) for information on the coronavirus.