

## Berks County Bar Association

# COVID-19

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Are Berks County attorneys permitted to be working in their law offices at this time?**

Yes. Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf issued guidance on April 27 that allows lawyers and staff to access physical offices on a limited basis to provide legal services: that cannot be practically completed through the use of advanced communication technologies; that are being rendered to comply with court directives or deadlines; and that meet needs that are critical to a client's health or safety, including, but not limited to, matters of healthcare, incompetence, incapacitation, end-of-life decision making, government benefits necessary to sustain life and access healthcare and income, or legal functions necessary for the operation of government at all levels. Lawyers and staff must adhere to all safety orders related to COVID-19 issued by the Secretary of Health.

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### **Does the guidance from the Governor allow attorneys to meet with clients?**

Yes. The governor's office has indicated that the guidelines allow for meeting with clients as long as proper precautions are taken to protect the health and safety of clients and staff.

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### **Can notaries visit my law office to assist with executing legal documents?**

Notaries are permitted to be present for in-person notarization of all legal documents. Again, the Governor has confirmed that this is acceptable under the guidance he provided.

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### **Is there still a statewide judicial emergency in Pennsylvania?**

Yes, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania extended the general statewide judicial emergency to June 1 in an order issued April 28. However, the court directed local courts to begin restoring some services and operations as early as May 4, depending on the COVID-19 conditions in their communities. To view the April 28 order, [click here](#).

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### **What is the status of the judicial emergency in Berks County?**

President Judge Thomas G. Parisi [extended the emergency order](#) until May 15. The courts are still handling essential services and hearings by alternate electronic means, such as video conferences. Parisi's order also noted that jury trials have been postponed for the entire month of May.

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**Is the Law Library at the courthouse open to attorneys?**

While most resources are now available online, the Law Library at the Berks County Courthouse is available to attorneys during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are no set hours during the pandemic, but attorneys may call Court Administration at 610-478-6208 to gain access.

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**How can I get CLE credits during the pandemic if there are no live seminars?**

The PA CLE board has made several exceptions this year due to the pandemic. The April 30 CLE deadline was extended until August 31 and attorneys are now allowed to earn all of their 12 credits through distance learning. In addition to seminars offered by PBI, the Berks County Bar Association has recently obtained conditional accreditation as a distance learning provider and is partnering with the Bucks County Bar Association to hold online seminars at discounted rates for members. These online seminars will be advertised on our [events calendar](#) with online registration.

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**How do I set up a video hearing for my case?**

The Berks County Courts have taken several steps to adapt to the current challenges from COVID-19, including moving to video conferences for some court hearings. To set up a video hearing for your case, you may contact the chambers of the judge presiding over it or court administration. Berks Courts are utilizing [Polycom](#) and [Microsoft Teams](#) for their video conferences. County officials have created instruction sheets for both programs that can be found on the Members Only page of [www.berksbar.org](http://www.berksbar.org).