



the doj & cd

Department:
Justice and Constitutional Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**BRANCH: COURT SERVICES' POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT
FAMILY ADVOCATE OFFICE : WESTERN CAPE**

Private Bag X136, CAPE TOWN, 8000 • 55 Union Castle Building, 10th Floor, Cnr Hout Street & St George's Mall,
CAPE TOWN, 8001, Tel (021) 426 1216, Fax (021) 424 6108

08 May 2020

Dear Stakeholder

RE: OFFICE OF THE FAMILY ADVOCATE (OFA) SERVICES DURING LEVEL 4 NATIONAL STATE OF DISTASTER

THE OFFICE OF THE FAMILY ADVOCATE remained operational in level 5 of the National State of Disaster with its services having been reconfigured to accommodate the pandemic and lockdown period in the best interests of children and families.

During level 4 of the National State of Disaster our offices remains operational. Subject to all impacting regulations and a circular from the DOJCD confirming what type of work the Department of DOJCD will be conducting; the OFA will continue with the following areas of work:

- Urgent court referrals;
- Matters with a return court date;
- Enquiries, report writing and filing;
- Registration of Parenting Plans (PP's) and Parental Responsibilities and Rights Agreements (PRR Agreements) telephonically, electronically with no personal contact;
- Mediations previously booked but cancelled due to level 5 restrictions through telephone/electronically only, no personal consultations;
- Matters that are long outstanding;
- International child abduction;
- Monitoring and endorsement of pleadings and consent papers;
- Queries: email and telephonic only;
- All parenting plans which are given for registration electronically should be commissioned and be accompanied by relevant documents.

We are limiting the need for physical contact and would ideally prefer electronic communication.

The OFA contact details as follows:

- Cape Town and Mitchell's Plain offices: (021) 426 1216,
- George office: (044) 802 4200,
- Worcester office: (023) 347 1238

Family Advocates or Family Law Assistants are available to assist.

You may also communicate with us via email:

Adv. N Britz: Nbritz@justice.gov.za for information/queries relating to Cape Town and Mitchell's Plain cluster areas;

Adv. J Gerber: JGerber@justice.gov.za for information/queries relating to George and Worcester cluster areas;

Adv. S Ebrahim: Shebrahim@justice.gov.za for information/queries relating to the Western Cape Province.

Your emails will be responded to and if you provide a telephone number we will contact you. Consultations may be dealt with telephonically should the parties give consent; alternatively, all consultations will be rescheduled to after the lockdown. We welcome queries on the status of investigations from parents and practitioners who are attending to such matters.

General information for parents experiencing difficulties with contact during this period

During this pandemic period we appreciate that there is grave anxiety about contact with children, the best interests of children remain paramount and their relationship with both parents should be prioritised as well the necessary precautions relating to the lock down period. As the Office of the Family Advocate we cannot request and or advise parents to act outside a court order nor to act in contradiction to the nation-wide lockdown and its regulations. If possible consideration should be given to contact between parents and children continuing subject to the safety of the children and the provisions of the Covid-19 lockdown. This is indeed a time for parents to exercise co-operative parenting to work together to ensure that children are not at risk. Other contact options such as skype and telephone contact, video calling will be relevant and should be explored by parents.

Please be safe during this time.

Sincerely



Adv S. Ebrahim
Principal Family Advocate: Western Cape