



# FRANKLIN COUNTY MUNICIPAL COURT

375 South High Street, Columbus, OH 43215

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Obtaining proper service of process is a critical legal requirement for ensuring people involved in court cases are aware of them and can receive their day in court. As part of obtaining service of process, Ohio courts depend heavily on the U.S. Postal Service to deliver important legal documents through the mail.

Early in the pandemic in March 2020, USPS altered its procedures for obtaining signatures when delivering certified mail. Letter carriers were authorized to sign for the person receiving the certified mail and mark the return of service "C-19" or something similar.

Representatives of the Columbus Post Office have informed the Franklin County Municipal Court that USPS has reverted back to their pre-pandemic procedures for obtaining signatures on certified mail. Effective April 1, 2022, letter carriers are no longer authorized to sign for the recipient and mark the return "C-19." The carrier must obtain the recipient's signature.

Despite eliminating the "C-19" practice in April this year, a significant percentage of all certified mail returns filed by USPS continue to be marked "C-19" or something similar. The Court has therefore approved and executed Administrative Order 04-2022, which will take effect August 1, 2022.

Among other things, Administrative Order 04-2022 directs the Clerk to docket certified mail returns marked C-19 or something similar as unsuccessful certified mail service when the return indicates delivery on or after April 1, 2022 (the date USPS eliminated the C-19 practice), and directs that motions for default judgment be denied for lack of service when a certified mail return marked C-19 or something similar indicates delivery on or after April 1, 2022, and service has not otherwise been achieved under the Ohio Rules of Civil Procedure.

*Enclosed: Administrative Order 04-2022*

**In the Franklin County Municipal Court  
Columbus, Ohio**

**Administrative Order Number: 04-2022**

**Effective: August 1, 2022**

The Court hereby makes the following Findings of Fact.

- I. On or about March 19 and March 20, 2020, the United States Postal Service (“USPS”) issued two updates regarding its response to the Covid-19 pandemic. USPS announced it was “temporarily” changing its “customer signature capture procedures” applicable to “all letter carriers.” For “signature service” mail items, carriers were instructed to locate a person at the delivery address and (instead of obtaining the person’s signature) obtain the person’s first initial and last name; print their own initials and route number on the return; and “notate C19” on the return “in lieu of” the person’s signature. If carriers do not locate a person at the delivery address, the updates instruct them to “follow the normal Notice Left process.”

Copies of the USPS updates from March 2020 are attached to this Administrative Order and are incorporated as if fully rewritten herein.

- II. Columbus Post Office Customer Relations Coordinator Michelle Shimmel has represented to the Court that, effective April 1, 2022, USPS reverted to standard operating procedure in effect prior to March 2020. Effective April 1, 2022, for mail requiring a signature, all USPS letter carriers are required to obtain a signature from a person found at the delivery address; they may “no longer perform the customer signature capture function for the recipient.”

A copy of the communication received from Ms. Shimmel is attached to this Administrative Order and is incorporated as if fully rewritten herein.

- III. As of the date of this Administrative Order’s execution, information supplied by the Clerk of Court reflects that USPS letter carriers continue to utilize the repealed “C-19” procedure from March 2020 with significant frequency.

Based upon these Findings of Fact, the Franklin County Municipal Court hereby issues the following orders.

1. When any return of certified mail service is filed by USPS on or after August 1, 2022, notated “C-19” “C19” “covid-19” “covid” “CV-19” or “CV19” and reflecting delivery of service on or after April 1, 2022, the Clerk of Court shall docket the return to reflect that the certified mail in question was not successfully delivered pursuant to Civ.R. 4.1(A)(1)(a).
2. When any return of certified mail service is filed by USPS on or after August 1, 2022, reflecting delivery of service on or after April 1, 2022, and there is a question as to whether the return is notated “C-19” or “covid-19” or anything similar, the Clerk shall refer the return to the Duty Judge for determination of whether the return reflects successful or unsuccessful certified mail service pursuant to Civ.R. 4.1(A)(1)(a).

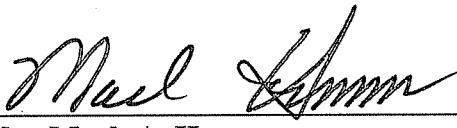
3. No default judgment pursuant to Civ.R. 55 shall be granted in any case wherein USPS filed a return of certified mail service notated "C-19" or "covid-19" or anything similar, which reflects delivery of service on or after April 1, 2022, and wherein service has not been otherwise achieved under the Ohio Rules of Civil Procedure.

4. With respect to any default judgment granted in any case wherein USPS filed a return of certified mail service annotated "C-19" or "covid-19" or anything similar, reflecting delivery of service on or after April 1, 2022, and wherein service was not otherwise achieved under the Ohio Rules of Civil Procedure, the Court will entertain any properly filed motion to vacate the default judgment for lack of service.

Cases in which any such motion is filed shall be individually assigned to a judge by lot, pursuant to Local Rule 1.01(A). After allowing for any responsive filing from the plaintiff, the motion will be ruled on.

Date

7/19/22

  
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Judge Mark A. Hummer  
Administrative and Presiding Judge

# Mandatory Stand-Up Talk

March 19, 2020

## Customer Signature Service

### COVID-19 Response and Prevention

A number of cases of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) have recently been confirmed across the country.

The safety and well-being of our employees is our highest priority. To help ensure the health of our employees, we are continuing to follow recommended guidance and strategies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local health departments, and are implementing additional measures to help maintain social distancing.

One significant measure being implemented is a temporary modification to mail handling procedures for mail that requires customer signatures. We recognize the close proximity and additional handling that occurs when employees must ask customers for a signature and government issued identification when required. To reduce health risks, we are temporarily modifying customer signature capture procedures for the MDD sign-on-glass feature, PS Form 3811 (Domestic Return Receipt), PS Form 3849 (We ReDeliver for You), and any hard-copy receipt items usually signed by customers. Effective immediately and until further notice, follow the temporary process below for signature service items. This process applies to all letter carriers:

- Avoid ringing the doorbell when possible. Knock on the customer's door. Avoid areas that may be frequently touched when knocking.
- While maintaining a safe, appropriate distance, request the customer's first initial and last name.
  - Using the MDD, scan the mail piece barcode, select Delivered and answer the prompted questions. Enter the customer's first initial and last name when prompted for name.
  - When prompted for the customer to sign the MDD's screen, employees are to print their own initials (not a signature), route number and notate C19 on the screen in lieu of the customer's signature.
  - For Return Receipts and other hard copy items, enter the customer's first initial and last name in the Signature box of the form.
  - For PS Forms 3811 and 3849, employees are to print their own initials (not a signature), route number and notate C19 in the "Received by" or "Printed Name" section, dependent on the form. With the PS Form 3849, scan the completed form following the normal process to finalize the delivery.
- For increased safety, politely ask the customer to step back a safe distance or close the screen door/door so you may leave the item in the mail receptacle or appropriate location by the customer door.
- If there is no response, follow the normal Notice Left process.
- If there are delivery points on your route where social distancing recommendations are difficult to follow, please advise your supervisor so alternative delivery methods can be explored.

It is important to remember that the best defense against sickness is good personal hygiene. Practice good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene. Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds at a time and cover your mouth when sneezing or coughing, using your elbow or a tissue, and then discard the tissue if you use one. When unable to wash hands with soap and water, it is recommended that hand sanitizer be used to help reduce the spread of germs.

Thank you for your attention.

March 20, 2020

## COVID-19 CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS UPDATE

### Customer Signature Service COVID-19 Response and Prevention

A number of cases of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) have recently been confirmed across the country.

The safety and well-being of our employees & customers is our highest priority. To help ensure the health of our employees & customers, we are continuing to follow recommended guidance and strategies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local health departments, and are implementing additional measures to help maintain social distancing.

One significant measure being implemented is a temporary modification to mail handling procedures for mail that requires customer signatures. We recognize the close proximity and additional handling that occurs when employees must ask customers for a signature and government issued identification when required. To reduce health risks, we are temporarily modifying customer signature capture procedures. Effective immediately and until further notice, our employees will follow the temporary process below for signature service items. This process applies to all letter carriers:

- Avoid ringing the doorbell when possible. Knock on the customer's door. Avoid areas that may be frequently touched when knocking.
- While maintaining a safe, appropriate distance, employees will request the customer's first initial and last name.
- For increased safety, employees will ask the customer to step back a safe distance or close the screen door/door so that they may leave the item in the mail receptacle or appropriate location by the customer door.
- If there is no response, employees will follow the normal Notice Left process.
- If there are delivery points on the route where social distancing recommendations are difficult to follow, alternative delivery methods can be explored.

Industry and commercial customers can email questions or concerns about COVID-19 and the mail to [industryfeedback@usps.gov](mailto:industryfeedback@usps.gov) with COVID-19 in the subject line. Mailers can also sign up for Industry Alerts at [industryalert@usps.gov](mailto:industryalert@usps.gov).

For more information, see the [USPS Coronavirus Statement at about.usps.com/newsroom](https://about.usps.com/newsroom).