

SALINE COUNTY JUDGE ISSUES “JUVENILE STAY AT HOME” EXECUTIVE ORDER

April 2, 2020—Saline County Judge Jeff Arey issued an Executive Order this afternoon under his emergency powers to combat the COVID-19 pandemic directing that juveniles in the unincorporated areas of Saline County must “stay at home” 24 hours a day unless they are accompanied by a parent, working, getting medical attention, or buying food or necessary supplies. The Order goes into effect on Monday, April 6th, but parents and guardians are urged to begin complying immediately. Judge Arey’s Order mirrors language in a related emergency declaration by Benton Mayor Tom Farmer issued today which applies to the city of Benton and also goes into effect on Monday.

Judge Arey explained, “I have been discussing this issue with other local officials, particularly Mayor Farmer and Circuit Judge Robert Herzfeld, who presides over Juvenile Court, for some time. I would strongly prefer that folks take this action on their own, but unfortunately that hasn’t been happening. We have been increasingly concerned about asymptomatic teens passing COVID-19 to one another and endangering themselves, their families, and our community. Frankly, from what we’ve seen, it appears that the grandparents of teens may be at the highest risk of dying from COVID-19. We have asked and pleaded and suggested for parents to keep kids home, but we understand this is easier said than done. Judge Herzfeld suggested that issuing this order will, among other things, make it easier to do what they need to do to protect their families.”

“I want to make crystal clear, that the objective of this order is to save lives. Our objective is absolutely *not* to arrest a bunch of teenagers or their parents. We expect officers and deputies to use their best judgement in breaking up groups, sending kids home, and only issuing citations or making arrests as a last resort. Should a citizen call 911 if they see a 17-year-old jogging down a path exercising? Please, no. We have to use common sense, but should they think about calling the non-emergency number if there is a group of teens hanging all over each other down by the river or roaming around

East End unsupervised? Hopefully that won't be happening, but Yes, a few words from a deputy telling them 'to get on home' might literally save lives. This may not be a popular decision with some folks, and we understand that, but we don't get elected to be popular we were chosen to serve and to make the tough calls." For more information contact Saline County Judge Jeff Arey at jeff.arey@salinecounty.org or 501-303-5640.