

SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA

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September 25, 2020

The Honorable Joi Jeter Taylor, Chief Judge
Richmond Circuit Court
400 North Ninth Street
John Marshall Courts Building
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Chief Judge Taylor:

A panel of three Justices in consultation with the Office of the Executive Secretary has approved your plan for the resumption of jury trials in the Richmond Circuit Court, John Marshall Courts Building. You may begin jury trials effective today, provided the jury trial is consistent with and in strict conformity with the plan. This approval is subject to a change in circumstances including failure to carry out the plan you have submitted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Donald W. Lemons".

Donald W. Lemons

Plan for Resumption of Jury Trials

August 5, 2020

Richmond Circuit Court

Introduction

In its Sixth Order Extending the Declaration of Judicial Emergency, the Supreme Court of Virginia asked each circuit court to develop a plan that describes how and when the circuit will be able to safely conduct jury trials. Before the issuance of this Sixth Declaration, the Richmond Circuit Court (the “Court”) formed a jury trial committee, whose goal was to determine how to safely resume jury trials in the Court. The committee has met and consulted with the Virginia Department of Health (“DOH”), the City of Richmond Department of Public Works (“DPW”), staff responsible for sanitation in the John Marshall Courthouse, the Circuit Court Clerk, the Richmond Sheriff’s Department, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”), and the Supreme Court of Virginia through its order and its document titled Guidance and Consideration for the Resumption of Jury Trials Memorandum. In addition, the Court has, by reference, incorporated guidance from the Department of Labor and Industry’s Emergency Temporary Standard. See 16 VAC25-220-40.

The Court met with DOH and conducted a walk-through of the John Marshall Courts building. DOH provided recommendations and suggestions on social distancing. The Court implemented DOH’s recommendations which include visual markings and notices at the entrance, the security line, clerks’ offices, elevators, hallways, meeting rooms, and courtrooms. We have attached photo references as Exhibit 1. When this report was being prepared, the total COVID-19 cases in the City of Richmond was 2,473, hospitalized 245 and deaths 36. For data update see <http://vdh.virginia.gov>.

After considering the social distancing requirements, security and other factors, the committee can give reasonable assurance that jurors can be safe while participating in the jury process in the City of Richmond. The Court will resume criminal jury trials at a rate of 2 per day. The Court will suspend civil jury trials for a period of 45 days while the criminal caseload is being managed. We know that we have a high volume of criminal jury trials in the City of Richmond with short speedy trial dates and believe that the priority should be given to those cases. At the end of the 45-day suspension, the committee will review the status of the criminal trial juries and determine whether it would be appropriate to resume civil jury trials.

The Richmond General District Court and the Richmond Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court have had employees and sheriff’s deputies test positive for COVID-19. In both instances, the Court has had temporary closure orders. Enhanced cleaning, contact tracing, and notice to the public was completed in a timely and efficient manner pursuant to requirements set by the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court and the City of Richmond, Emergency Management Services.

Criteria Considered

The following are the criteria this Court has considered in determining whether we can safely conduct jury trials.

1. Public Health Evaluation for Richmond
2. Modification to Juror Questionnaire and Summons
3. Public Service Announcements directed to Potential Jurors
 - a. What is court doing to prepare for Jury duty
 - b. How often/how soon before we start
 - c. Juror call-in messages
 - d. Juror portal
 - e. Court and Sheriff website
 - f. Public survey on city website regarding jury duty
 - g. video showing courthouse social distancing updates
4. Hearing or Conducting Jury Trial
5. Juror Recusals and Deferral Policy
6. Pre-Trial Conferences
7. Air ventilation within the John Marshall Courts Building
8. Sanitation Schedule
9. Security

Air Filtration

The committee met with Mr. Bobby Vincent, Director of DPW. Mr. Vincent spoke with us about the air quality of the John Marshall Courthouse and the sanitation plan for the Court once jury trials resume. It should be noted that the John Marshall Courthouse is currently undergoing work to its cooling and heating system with VAV Box replacements which will continue throughout the summer. DPW has assured the Court that the air quality within the building is up to code and meets the air quality required per CDC guidelines. DPW has employed MERV-13 and MERV-15 air filters in the John Marshall Courthouse central air unit. These filters are capable of filtering .3 microns. The COVID-19 virus is .5 microns. These air filters are regularly maintained and are on a routine schedule to be replaced.

Enhanced Cleaning

In addition, DPW has also indicated that it will increase the enhanced sanitation schedule once jury trials begin. The John Marshall Courthouse is currently on a daily enhanced cleaning schedule in certain areas. The clerk's offices and personal offices are cleaned daily. The courthouse and courtrooms are cleaned and disinfected daily. The witness box will be disinfected with wipes between witnesses.

All high touch areas such as the witness stand and microphone, seating, tables and bathrooms will be cleaned frequently, at least every 2 hours.

Breaks normally occur every 1.5 hours. Typically, the court will do all of voir dire, then immediately take a break. Following that break, the court will hear evidence for about 1.5 hours, then take a break for lunch. Following lunch, the court typically takes a break another 1.5 hours later, and continues on in such a pattern for the duration of the trial. During these breaks, high touch surfaces will be cleaned.

Jury Summons

The Court's Jury Summons and Questionnaire have been modified. The Summons and Questionnaire address the requirements for reporting, the screening process upon arrival at the courthouse, and the safety measures that have been implemented to protect the jurors in the courthouse. See Exhibit 4. The Court now requires jurors to provide email addresses and cell phone numbers in addition to home phone numbers. The Court has also decreased the age limit for excused jury duty from 70 to 65 per CDC guidelines. The committee also reviewed the U.S. Census data for Richmond and learned that Richmond has 11.1% of the population age 65 and over.

In addition, the Jury Questionnaire includes information on whether the potential juror is a health care worker or a first responder and asks whether the person works with COVID-19 patients or otherwise comes into contact with COVID-19 positive individuals. We have also listed several Covid-19 factors for jurors to consider when responding to the questionnaire. Jurors have access to more information from the Sheriff's Community Outreach **Covid-19 Line on (804) 646-1824**. See Exhibit 2. To secure a larger pool of prospective jurors, we will begin with setting only criminal cases, using 2 courtrooms per jury trial and limit the number to not more than two jury trials per day. Also, we will temporarily suspend setting jury trials on Fridays in an effort to increase the pool of prospective jurors being available for trials that are set to proceed on the Monday through Thursday dockets. Specifically, the jurors normally called for Friday juries will be redistributed throughout the rest of the week.

We will summons at least 100 prospective jurors per day for 2 criminal jury trials. The plan takes into consideration the general rate of nonappearance (averaging approximately twenty percent) and the anticipated increase of nonappearance based on COVID-19 concerns/issues. The Jury Office is also implementing an updated computer and phone system to allow protective jurors to have instant and increased access to the court for requests to be excused from jury duty.

The Juror packet will include information on what the Court is doing (i.e. precautions – what to expect.) This information also appears on the Court's website, the City website and the Sheriff's website and other social media operated by the City or available to the City such as Next Door. The information includes, in part, the following:

1. Masks are required
2. Non-touch temperature mandatory
3. Socially distanced/visual markings – six feet apart
4. Frequent hand washing required/hand sanitizer available throughout the building and specifically for jurors
5. Describing sanitation process

6. Advising that more time will be required so early arrival time and possible late departures
7. Staggered reporting

The Court's Deferral and Excusal Policies for the Richmond Circuit Court include:

1. Medical hardship
2. Financial hardship
3. Positive COVID-19 test or waiting for test results
4. Under active quarantine
5. Household with high risk individual
6. Healthcare professional (if not opted out by questionnaire)
7. Failure to appear – follow up letters for deferral without a hearing/amnesty program
8. The Court will be keeping statistics on the number of excuses and the nature of the excuse and whether the excuse is COVID-19 related
9. Prospective jurors Questionnaire should be filed under seal where health information is gathered

Reporting for Jury Duty

In addition to the Juror Questionnaire and Summons, the committee also reviewed the manner in which jurors report for Jury Duty. Any juror who comes to court without a mask will be given a mask or other face covering. Each juror who is ultimately selected will have an individual juror packet of gloves, pen and paper, and sanitation supplies.

1. Parking and Security – Sheriff's Department will oversee the parking and security of the jurors and direct them to the proper assembly area. Jurors will park in the parking deck located on 8th Street, adjacent to the Courthouse. Jurors will be met by a sheriff's deputy and escorted to the main entrance of the courthouse.
2. Courthouse Entry Notices – Each juror, and all those entering the courthouse, must maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet and undergo temperature check upon entry to the court building.
3. Jury Assembly rooms, courtrooms, hallways, bathrooms, elevators, clerk's offices have been clearly marked for social distancing with visual signs on floors, chairs, tables, doors and walls. The Sheriff escort jurors to lower assembly areas and will direct and manage the jurors while in the jury assembly room and during check-in. Jurors will watch 15-minute orientation video under the supervision of the Sheriff.
4. Due to staggered reporting times, jurors will begin check-in at 7:00 and 8:00 a.m., which will provide for a 9:00 am start. Assembly room is cleaned between each group with EPA-approved chemicals.
5. Group 1 (50 people) will assemble in jury assembly room. Social distancing will be maintained.
6. Group 2 (50 people) will assemble in assigned courtrooms. Social distancing will be maintained.
7. Sheriff will escort jurors via elevator to 3rd floor of the courthouse to begin jury selection.

8. Upon completion of their service, the Sheriff will escort jurors to elevators and exit through the west side entrance of the courthouse while maintaining social distancing. Sheriff will escort jurors to the parking lot and maintain security while they exit.

Pre-trial conferences are mandatory for each criminal jury trial. Parties are reminded to alert the Court if a case has settled. The factors considered are as follows:

1. Require pre-trial conference hearings for each criminal jury trial
2. Pre-trial motions scheduled
3. Discuss voir dire questions/jury instructions/motions/deadlines, etc. (COVID-19 questions required)
4. Counsel instructed to advise clients and witnesses regarding masks and other COVID-19 protocols
5. The parties will discuss the length of trial
6. How many jurors to be called – The Court can only accommodate a maximum of 105 jurors, and expects lower yields from jury pool and will discuss with counsel constitutional minimums or waiver. See *Williams v. Florida*, 399 U.S. 78, 103 (1970) (holding six-man jury did not violate 14th amendment). See also Art. I, Sec. 8 of the Virginia Constitution (“If the accused pleads not guilty, he may, with his consent and the concurrence of the attorney for the Commonwealth and the court of record, be tried by a smaller number of jurors, or waive a jury.”).
7. Discuss the use of alternates, particularly in criminal jury trials
8. Consider if fewer jurors/strikes can be accommodated by parties.
9. Review Social Distancing in Courtroom – See attachment Exhibit 5. This diagram details the layout required to maximize social distancing in the courtroom. The diagram depicts the location of attorney tables. Attorneys and their client(s) are required to wear a mask, unless the judge permits them to remove their mask for limited purposes. The attorney and their client(s) are also required to maintain proper social distancing.
10. Review courtroom protocols
 - a. Breaks will occur frequently, every 2 hours
 - b. Attorneys and clients may hold confidential conferences in the former jury room
 - c. Sheriff will monitor the defendant during jury breaks and lunch
 - d. Sidebars will occur in the hallway or in the auxiliary courtroom
 - e. Conferences during trial other than sidebar will occur in the former jury room, hallway, or judge’s chambers
 - f. Offers of proof will occur at jury breaks
 - g. Victim Witness support – Committee recommended 1 discretionary support for witness other than Victim Witness employee
 - h. Exhibits – The Court will ask that counsel produce separate copies for each juror. For nondocumentary exhibits, the Court will provide gloves with proper instruction from the judge, and will ask jurors to dispose of the gloves after each use. The Court will also provide an exhibit table for nondocumentary exhibits.

- i. Documents for witnesses will be placed on the witness stand prior to the witness taking the stand. Gloves and proper instruction will be provided to the witness, and the gloves will be disposed of after each use.
- j. Counsel are to re-file case citations list/provide copies of cases for judge prior to the trial.
- k. Attorneys will remain at counsel tables. The lectern will not be used unless leave granted by court. If lectern is used, it will be cleaned and sanitized after its use.
- l. Witness stand will have hand sanitizer available.
- m. Counsel must request to approach the bench, clerk, witness while maintaining social distance. Counsel may only approach closer than 6 feet with leave of court.
- n. Each juror will be provided an individual copy of the jury instructions.

Entry into the Courthouse

All persons entering the courthouse will be subject to COVID-19 screening and a temperature check. The COVID-19 screening will consist of the following questions:

- Within the last 14 days have you traveled internationally?
- Are you currently experiencing, or have you experienced in the past 14 days, a fever, cough or shortness of breath?
- Within 14 days of the trial date have you had (or do you have):
 - Fever or chills?
 - Cough?
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (other than a pre-existing non-COVID diagnosis)?
 - Fatigue?
 - Muscle or body aches?
 - Headache?
 - New loss of taste or smell?
 - Sore throat?
 - Congestion or runny nose?
 - Nausea or vomiting?
 - Diarrhea?
- In the past 14 days, have you been in close proximity to anyone who was experiencing any of the above listed symptoms?
- In the past 14 days, have you been directed to quarantine, isolate, or self-monitor?
- In the past 14 days, have you been diagnosed with, or had contact with anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or resided with someone in the above categories?
- Have you been tested for COVID-19 and are waiting to receive test results?

Any person who answers “yes” to the COVID-19 screening questions will be prohibited from entering the courthouse. Any person who cannot wear a face mask will be prohibited from entering the courthouse. If the person answering “yes” or who is unable to wear a face mask is a necessary party or witness, the Court will make accommodations such as using live streaming,

Polycom, Webex, or a face shield for a person who cannot wear a mask. If the court provides a face shield, which is not currently recommended as a substitute for masks by the CDC, the face shield will comply with the CDC's better source control recommendations: "face shields that wrap around the sides of the wearer's face and extend below the chin." All other CDC recommendations for face shields will be followed.¹ If a person must wear a face shield, they will be socially distanced more than 10 feet from all other persons.

Jurors will enter the courthouse through the main entrance with employees and the public. A mask will be provided to any prospective juror who arrives at the courthouse without a mask. If the juror refuses to wear a mask, the juror will not be permitted to enter the courthouse. The Sheriff's deputies will immediately notify the court of any such issue, which the court will handle on a case-by-case basis. After being screened, jurors will be directed to the Lower Level where they will have Juror Orientation. That Juror Orientation occurs in a waiting room that is separate from the general public.

Additionally, jurors will report for Juror Orientation at staggered times to allow for social distancing in the waiting room during Orientation and ultimately in the courtrooms. As voir dire is being conducted in the courtrooms, jurors will be spread out between two courtrooms that are connected via video link. The use of two courtrooms connected by video link will allow the jurors to maintain social distancing while engaging in voir dire. The judge and Sheriff work together to maintain social distancing within the courtroom. Considerations are to cordon off or clearly designate juror areas from the rest of the seating areas.

The public will have access to voir dire. The jurors will be divided so as to allow a few empty, socially distanced seats to remain vacant for members of the public.

Elevators and stairwells will be open for all individuals to use. However, they are not frequently used. Again, social distancing will be encouraged on the stairs. Elevators in the courthouse are currently marked with social distancing markers on the ground. Those markers limit occupancy on the elevator to 3 individuals. There are 3 public elevators, so 9 individuals could be transported on the elevator at one time. The bathrooms, stairs, and elevators are all cleaned daily. Additionally, jurors will consistently have access to hand sanitizer in the courtroom. Where possible, bathrooms will be reserved specifically for jurors.

Face Coverings

All persons, including witnesses, must wear face coverings. The witness stand, however, is sufficiently distanced from any other person in the courtroom to allow the witness to take the face covering down and testify with face exposed. If a lawyer or bailiff needs to approach a witness to hand him something, the Court will instruct the witness to recover his or her face covering before allowing the approach.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html#face-shields>

If face coverings impair the ability of a lawyer to communicate with the witness or with the Court, the Court may grant the attorney permission to remove his or her face covering as necessary, ensuring that the attorney remains physically distant from other persons in the courtroom.

A criminal defendant may be asked to remove his face covering during voir dire to ensure that prospective jurors can see him and indicate whether any know him or recognize him. He may also be asked to lower his face covering briefly for the purpose of enabling a witness to see his face and answer whether the witness can identify the defendant.

If face coverings impair the ability of a lawyer and his client to communicate at counsel table (and alternate methods of communication such as note-writing, texting between devices, etc., are unavailable or insufficient), the Court will permit counsel whatever recesses are necessary for the purpose of facilitating private communication. The Court expects counsel to maintain social distancing with co-counsel and his or her client at all times.

Jurors will wear face coverings at all times, but the Court expects to permit individual jurors to lower the cover briefly if requested by counsel, while ensuring proper social distancing of at least 10-feet from all other persons.

Sidebars may be conducted at the bench, with a plexiglass shield separating the judge from the lawyers, or alternatively in the jury deliberation room immediately behind the courtroom.

The Court will make face shields available if necessary. If the court provides a face shield, which is not currently recommended as a substitute for masks by the CDC, the face shield will comply with the CDC's better source control recommendations: "face shields that wrap around the sides of the wearer's face and extend below the chin." All other CDC recommendations for face shields will be followed.² If a person must wear a face shield, they will be socially distanced more than 10 feet from all other persons.

Conducting the Jury Trial

Jurors will be assigned seats once the trial begins and retain that seat throughout the trial. Jurors will be seated in designated areas, namely, the juror box and half of the gallery. This will allow for proper juror distancing.

The clerk will be seated either to the right or left of the judge, depending how the courtroom is designed (each courtroom has a different layout). The clerk's seating also allows for proper social distancing from the judge, attorneys, deputies, jurors, and witnesses. Courtrooms are equipped with plexiglass dividers on both sides of the witness box, at the clerk's desk and on one side of the court reporter.

² <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html#face-shields>

Attorneys will be instructed to stagger witness arrival times to better accommodate social distancing. Witnesses, like all other persons, are not allowed to enter the building without a mask. A mask will be provided if the witness does not have a mask. All social distancing requirements will be met and maintained.

If the trial is one of significant interest, members of the public will be placed in the overflow courtroom during the trial. The public will be asked to leave the overflow courtroom if a sidebar becomes necessary and when the jury retires to the overflow courtroom for breaks or deliberation.

Sidebars will occur in the overflow courtroom or hallway. When sidebars are necessary, the jury will remain in the primary courtroom while the court, attorneys, and court reporter move to the overflow courtroom. In the overflow courtroom, social distancing requirements will be maintained as the judge hears the sidebar. In the event that there are any spectators in the overflow courtroom, they will be requested to leave that space and wait in the hall, which is marked to provide for social distancing, prior to the sidebar beginning.

The Court will encourage attorneys to avoid exchanging documents with jurors, but rather use technology to publish or incorporate an exhibit table where jurors can safely view documents without touching. If technology is not available or an option, to the extent possible, attorneys are expected to make individual copies of exhibits for jurors. If it becomes necessary for jurors to handle exhibits that need to be passed from juror to juror, the court will provide disposable gloves with instructions on use and proper disposal of gloves in compliance with CDC and VDH guidelines. Single use writing devices that can be disposed of is also recommended for each juror.

A Sheriff's deputy will be stationed near criminal defendants, allowing for proper social distancing but also being mindful of security concerns. Other deputies will move throughout the courtroom as necessary while remaining cognizant of social distancing requirements. Deputies are required to wear a mask and allowed to wear gloves when possible.

All areas such as the witness stand and microphone, seating, tables and bathrooms will be cleaned frequently, every 2 hours. Two bathrooms are available for jurors to wash their hands during each of these breaks. Bathrooms are single occupancy, so social distancing will not be an issue in bathrooms. Breaks normally occur every 1.5 hours. Typically, the court will do all of voir dire, then immediately take a break. Following that break, the court will hear evidence for about 1.5 hours, then take a break for lunch. Following lunch, the court typically takes a break another 1.5 hours later, and continues on in such a pattern for the duration of the trial. During these breaks, high touch surfaces will be cleaned.

At the end of each day, the court will remind attorneys to remove all documents from tables for cleaning and disinfectant. The Richmond Circuit Court will be using two courtrooms for each jury trial with audio/visual connection between the courtrooms. The court will receive juror questions from the foreperson in the traditional manner and each judge shall determine the method of response.

The Sheriff's Department will ensure jurors and parties are maintaining social distancing at all points in time and arrange, when necessary, all juror meals. Potential jurors will be allowed to bring their own lunch, snacks and water bottles. Jurors will not leave the courthouse for meals. The court will provide lunch and/or dinner to the jurors. Jurors will use the overflow courtroom for dining and for deliberations. Seating will be marked and jurors are expected to occupy the same seat in each courtroom as they move between courtrooms. The seating is pre-marked to allow for proper social distancing.

The second courtroom shall serve as jury deliberation room and secured by a deputy sheriff(s). The jurors will self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and will be asked to report symptoms to the deputy, clerk or judge as soon as possible. If someone develops symptoms of COVID-19 or tests positive for COVID-19 during trial, the trial will be immediately adjourned and the court will contact the Virginia Department of Health and seek their advice on how to proceed. If the Department directs the court to close, the trial will either be continued or a mistrial will be declared. If the Department does not direct the court to close, the court will consult with Counsel to determine how they would like to proceed.

Plan of Action and Communication in the Event of a COVID-19 Exposure

If someone develops symptoms of COVID-19 or tests positive for COVID-19 during trial, the trial will be immediately adjourned and the court will contact the Virginia Department of Health and seek their advice on how to proceed. If DOH directs the Court to close, the trial will either be continued or a mistrial will be declared. If the Department does not direct the court to close, the court will consult with Counsel to determine how they would like to proceed.

In other instances of juror illness unrelated to COVID-19, the court shall inform the participants and proceed with alternates or pursuant to the agreed pre-trial conference procedure. The Richmond Circuit Court does not do COVID-19 testing on-site. Instead, when anyone enters the building their temperature is taken and they are asked screening questions. If someone has a fever or answers affirmatively to any of those questions, they are not admitted to the courthouse. If an individual is granted admission to the courthouse, we do not have other screening mechanisms to test individuals.

If someone who enters the building for work or otherwise develops symptoms of COVID-19, they are immediately sent home and instructed to get tested as soon as possible and report their results to the courthouse. Upon learning of such potential contamination, the court will contact the Virginia Department of Health and seek their advice on how to proceed. If they direct closure, such closure will occur.

Regardless, in the event closure or continuance become necessary, the Court will conduct contact tracing through the Jury Office. Specifically, the Jury Office will attempt to contact jurors either by phone or by email to notify them of the closure and potential exposure. Additionally, the Jury Office recording will be updated to inform potential jurors coming in about the potential exposure.

As referenced above, the Court shall provide each juror an individual set of the instructions to reference while deliberating. The jury verdict form shall be received in the traditional manner. Sentencing shall proceed using the same criteria as the trial.

Need for Modifications

Once we begin hearing jury trials, we recognize that some areas of weakness will present itself and we will tweak the plan and make modifications where appropriate, with notice to the bar. We intend to implement the plan in phases, with a one-day criminal jury trial as the first phase, once the jury resumption plan is approved. The second phase would be to conduct a 2-day jury trial or if one is not scheduled, a 2-a-day schedule for 1 day of the week. The third phase would be to conduct 2-a-day juries for a week and include multi-day juries.

Our plan provides that we would continuously monitor the CDC, and Virginia Health Department for specific information regarding COVID-19 in the Richmond area. In addition, we will and have maintained a close working relationship with the City Department of Public Works, and the Emergency Management Services within the Richmond Fire Department. We recognize the current risk to certain individuals within our community to serve on a jury, and we are committed to making jury trials in the City of Richmond as reasonably safe as possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Joi Jeter Taylor, Chief Judge

Richmond Circuit Court

Exhibit One



Exhibit Two

COVID-19 Precautions Juror Supplement

The Judges of the Richmond Circuit Court acknowledges that you may be concerned about visiting the Courthouse for jury duty during the COVID-19 Pandemic. We want to assure you that the Court has taken significant precautions to ensure your safety and health while visiting the Courthouse. These precautions include:

- Requiring masks be worn by all individuals who enter the Courthouse;
- Taking everyone's temperature with a no-touch thermometer upon entry to the Courthouse;
- Verbally screening each visitor to the Courthouse to ensure they are not at high risk for contracting COVID-19;
- Placing social distancing visual markers throughout the Courthouse to help keep our visitors 6 feet apart;
- Placing additional hand sanitizer stations throughout the Courthouse;
- Increasing signage to encourage all individuals who enter the Courthouse to wash their hands frequently and thoroughly and to cover their cough;
- Increasing the frequency of sanitizing services throughout the Courthouse with thorough cleaning conducted every night; and
- Staggering jury member report times so there are less individuals congregated in our auditorium at any one time.

The CDC considers the following individuals at high risk for contracting COVID-19:

- People aged 65 and older;
- People living in a nursing home or long-term care facility;
- People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma;
- People who have serious heart conditions;
- People who are immunocompromised;
- People with severe obesity (with a body mass index of 40 or higher);
- People with diabetes;
- People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis; and
- People with liver disease.

Any individual facing a medical or financial hardship, at high risk for contracting COVID-19 as defined above, with a positive COVID-19 test or awaiting test results, actively under quarantine, in a household with an individual at high risk for contracting COVID-19, and healthcare professional working directly with COVID-19 patients may be eligible for excusal for jury duty. Please contact the Jury Office if you believe you may be eligible for excusal. Jurors may also contact the Sheriff's Community Outreach Covid-19 Line at **804-646-1824** for more information.

Because of the additional health screening precautions being taken by the Court, please arrive 15 minutes before your jury member report time to allow time to be screened and go through security.