



**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FOURTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 2021-00-09
Amendment 1**

**RE: COVID-19 OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR THE FOURTEENTH JUDICIAL
CIRCUIT**

WHEREAS, in accordance with Fla. Admin. Order No. AOSC 21-17, Amendment 1, judicial circuits are directed to develop an operational plan, as described herein.

WHEREAS the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit will continue to implement the following health and safety precautions to protect the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering courthouses and court facilities.

WHEREAS, pursuant to AOSC 21-17, Amendment 1, the following operational plan is implemented effective August 2, 2021.

WHEREAS, pursuant to AOSC 21-17, Amendment 1, I. C. (1)(a) and (b), a chief judge may determine the necessity for social distancing and the wearing face coverings based on local health conditions.

GENERAL

1. The court places the health and safety of all "justice stakeholders" at the highest priority. Likewise, judges shall lead during this pandemic by comporting themselves in such a manner to increase the public's confidence in court operations.
2. All judges will continue to use reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely, in accord with the law.
3. Judges shall conclude litigation as soon as it is reasonably and justly possible to do so, take charge of all cases at an early stage and to control the progress of the cases thereafter until it is determined, and apply a firm continuance policy allowing continuances only for good cause shown.
4. Judges shall remind members of the Florida Bar that lawyers must strictly comply with Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.545 (a), and shall conclude litigation as soon as reasonably and justly possible to do, and that the pandemic alone is not a basis for a lawyer's failure to prepare a case for trial or otherwise actively manage a case. Discovery depositions under Florida Rule of Criminal Procedure Rule 3.220, may proceed using remote means or in-person as circumstances dictate.

JUDGES AND COURT STAFF HEALTH

1. Judges and court staff should, at a minimum, self-check for symptoms. Judges and staff should follow the advice of their personal physicians when sick and follow CDC and FDOH guidelines, as well as local policies enacted by Court Administration when returning to work from sickness or travel.
2. Provided that any given county remains for two consecutive weeks at or below 10% positivity rates, masks will no longer be required to be worn. The Chief Judge will notify each county as to their eligibility. Judges and court staff may continue to wear face coverings during in-person court proceedings. In all other locations in a courthouse, persons are recommended to wear facemasks. Persons entering courtrooms shall be provided a face mask upon request.

This condition may change based upon the dynamic nature of present circumstances and COVID-19 infections.

3. Protective Measures:
 - Hand sanitizer is widely available throughout the courthouse, including inside courtrooms, and the bench area.
 - Masks will be available in all courtrooms and hearings rooms.
4. Court Administration continues to provide available supplies, training, and other technical assistance to judges and/or court staff, if necessary, to address any changes/updates to this operational plan.
5. The Clerk will continue to provide for general cleaning of court facilities.
6. Relevant CDC and Florida Department of Health guidance will be communicated to judges and court staff on an on-going process.
7. The release of any sensitive health information shall be safeguarded by all judges and court staff.

SCHEDULING

1. Judges and court managers shall continue to meet with their designated deputy clerks to establish staggered schedules to meet maximum occupancy in each courtroom. **All judges shall stagger each docket of essential proceedings involving in-person litigants.**

SOCIAL DISTANCING

1. Provided that any given county remains for two consecutive weeks at or below 10% positivity rates, social distancing requirements shall be suspended. The Chief Judge will notify each county as to their eligibility. There are no limitations on who may enter a courtroom. Live streaming options may be available in certain courts, and for those

types of hearings where recordings are available, arrangements for purchase of said recordings may be made through Court Reporting Services.

This condition may change based upon the dynamic nature of present circumstances and COVID-19 infections.

HYGIENE (All previous requirements are incorporated by reference to earlier versions of this Plan except as noted)

SCREENING

1. Provided that any given county remains for two consecutive weeks at or below 10% positivity rates, health screening at the front door of any courthouse shall be suspended.
2. Inmates being transported from the jail to the court building will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and have their temperature taken prior to transport. Inmates with symptoms as described will not be transported to the court building. Transport officers shall notify the bailiff of the presiding judge as to an inmate's non-admittance. Remote proceedings shall be used to the maximum extent possible, consistent with Constitutional safeguards and protections.

FACE COVERINGS

1. Face masks may be worn (but not mandated) during periods of eligibility.
2. Individuals should bring masks with them. If a person does not have a mask, one will be provided by the Court so long as supplies last.

This condition may change based upon the dynamic nature of present circumstances and COVID-19 infections.

CLEANING

1. The Clerk of Court in partnership with its county shall arrange for regular cleaning of public areas and courtrooms utilizing cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.

COMMUNICATION

All updates to this plan, any ensuing plans and relevant administrative orders shall be communicated electronically, via Twitter, Instagram, and placed on each circuits' website, as well as all other applicable orders. Relevant informational videos shall be placed on the circuit website and YouTube. Any other information or requests shall be handled by the Court Public Information Officers.

This Administrative Order shall take effect immediately and shall remain in effect until further order of the Court.

DONE AND ORDERED in Chambers, at Panama City, Bay County, Florida, this 11th
day of October, 2021.



CHRISTOPHER N. PATTERSON
CHIEF JUDGE



A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY
BILL KINSAUL CLERK
OF THE CIRCUIT COURT

By Christina Barlow
Deputy Clerk