

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
EIGHTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
OF FLORIDA

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO.:
20-28

**IN RE: ADMINISTRATIVE RULES - COVID-19 REOPENING PROCEDURES -
TRANSITIONING FROM PHASE 1 TO PHASE 2**

WHEREAS, reopening the courts of the Eighteenth Judicial Circuit will be in conformity with AOSC 20-23 *Amendment 1* which will result in a greater number of persons using and occupying courthouses, and

WHEREAS, in order to implement the objectives of AOSC 20-23 *Amendment 1* and Executive Order 20-112 and all orders and phases anticipated to follow, the Eighteenth Judicial Circuit Workgroup has established the protocols set forth herein:

WHEREAS, the Supreme Court has set forth the following benchmarks which the Eighteenth Judicial Circuit has met:

1. No confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 in the court facility within a 14-day period; or if confirmed or suspected cases have occurred in the court facility, deep cleaning and disinfecting of exposed areas and applicable employee self-quarantine actions have been implemented.
2. Rescission of local and state restrictive movement and/or stay-at-home orders.
3. Improving COVID-19 health conditions over a 14-day period in the community, including conditions such as the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases and related deaths in relation to a community's population density, downward trajectory of positive tests as a percent of total tests, size of particularly vulnerable populations, and availability of medical facilities including emergency and intensive care capacity.
4. Adequate testing programs in place, increased availability of COVID-19 tests, and emerging antibody testing.

5. Consultation with other building occupants (for multi-tenant courthouses or buildings) and with justice system partners (including, but not limited to clerk of court, state attorney, public defender, law enforcement, local bar, and others necessary to resume certain case types, such as the Department of Children and Families).

THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority of the Chief Judge under section 43.26, Florida Statutes, and Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.215,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED as follows:

- A. Effective as of the date of this Order, the following protocols shall be observed in all courthouses in the Eighteenth Judicial Circuit:
 1. **Temperature Taking:** All persons entering courthouses shall have their temperature taken in a non-intrusive manner. Persons with temperatures over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit will be denied entry into the courthouse.
 2. **Screening by Questionnaire:** Each person entering a courthouse shall be screened using the following questionnaire:
 - Question 1: Do you have any of the following symptoms (excluding those due to a known medical reason):
 - Cough
 - Severe Headache
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Sore throat
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Question 2: Are you currently awaiting the results of a test to determine if you have COVID-19?
 - Question 3: Are you under instructions to self-isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19?
 - Question 4: Have you had close contact with someone with a COVID-19 diagnosis or who is awaiting test results for COVID-19?
 - Question 5: Have you travelled to an area with a notably high concentration of COVID-19 cases?
 3. **Social Distancing Measures.** Because the virus is thought to spread between persons who are in close contact with one another, the social distancing measures set forth below shall be followed to the maximum extent possible:
 - a. Masks. All persons entering courthouses must wear a face covering. All such persons are strongly encouraged to bring their own face covering; otherwise, a disposable mask will be provided.

- b. Six-Foot Distancing. All persons must keep at least six feet between themselves and others, even when wearing a face covering, inclusive of elevators, hallways, and restrooms.
- 4. **Hand Sanitizing**. Hand sanitization stations will be implemented at several locations throughout all courthouses. Persons within a courthouse will be encouraged to use them.
- 5. **Cleaning of Courthouses**. Counties shall continue to clean courthouses as recommended by local health officials.
- 6. **Physical Handling of Documents**. To the maximum extent possible, physical handling of documents is to be avoided.
- B. **Notices of Hearing**. Until further order of this Court, all notices of court hearings issued by counsel or the court shall contain statements requiring bringing and wearing masks in the courthouse, bringing valid photo ID such as a driver's license, and a request to call 321-351-6255 to receive relevant information regarding entering a courthouse.
- C. **Transport of Inmates**. Because of risks associated with virus transmission among inmates, judges are strongly discouraged from ordering the transport of inmates to court. However, if deemed necessary for a court proceeding, judges may bring inmates to the courtroom from the county jails. Prior to entering a courthouse inmates must be masked.
- D. **Courtroom Decorum and Social Distancing Measures**. In order to conduct proceedings appropriately, judges shall maintain traditional individual control of courtroom proceedings. Keeping in mind the goal is reduction of disease transmission, judges should regulate the number and location of persons in their courtrooms at any time so as to facilitate the protection of individuals from COVID-19.
- E. **Remote Hearings/Proceedings**. Judges are directed to continue to maximize remote work to limit the number of in-person court appearances and thereby reduce the risks of COVID-19 exposure to all persons involved in court proceedings.

This Administrative Order shall remain in effect until further notice or until superseded by further order of this Court or the Florida Supreme Court.

DONE AND ORDERED this 4th day of June, 2020.

LISA DAVIDSON
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CHIEF JUDGE

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