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Update for May 15, 2020

Justices, Judges, Circuit Court Clerks and Kentucky Court of Justice Personnel:

Judicial Branch announces plan to resume limited in-person court services starting June 1

Two weeks ago we announced that the Judicial Branch had formed three task forces to determine how to gradually resume in-person services starting June 1. Our priority is to implement a limited, phased reopening that will allow greater access to the courts while keeping court personnel and the public safe through social distancing and other precautions.

Supreme Court Order Expanding Court Operations

I am pleased today to provide the plan that will guide court operations in the coming months. Health and Safety Requirements for the Expansion of Operations can be found in Supreme Court Administrative Order 2020-39, dated May 15, 2020, and effective June 1, 2020. You can find the complete order [here](#).

The directives are quite extensive and I encourage everyone to read this order carefully. However, the main points are:

- Courts may resume hearing all civil and criminal matters.
- All hearings should be conducted remotely, unless the judge determines that an in-person hearing is necessary.
- If a matter requires an in-person hearing, several safety precautions must be observed, including limiting courtroom capacity, social distancing, facial coverings and frequent disinfecting of public spaces.
- Entrance to court facilities is limited to individuals with a scheduled in-person hearing and those filing emergency protective orders, interpersonal protective orders and emergency custody orders.
- All Kentucky Court of Justice officials and employees and all members of the public entering a court facility must wear a facial covering.

- Members of the public are prohibited from bringing purses or similarly enclosed bags into court facilities, unless items in the bags are medically necessary.
- Telework will be encouraged for any employee who is able to do so.
- Staffing will be limited to 50%, unless an exception is granted by the Department of Human Resources.

Producing the reopening plan took an intense effort and I want to thank the three Supreme Court justices for their work on this unprecedented assignment: Deputy Chief Justice Lisabeth Hughes, chair of the Circuit Court Task Force; Justice Debra Lambert, chair of the Family Court Task Force; and Justice Michelle Keller, chair of the District Court Task Force.

In addition to the reopening order, the Supreme Court will issue specific guidance on driver's license services and certain court matters, such as evictions and jury service, in the coming days.

Health and Safety Requirements for Court Personnel

The Administrative Office of the Courts has also produced a detailed guide on how to implement the required health and safety precautions. You can find the Kentucky Court of Justice COVID-19 Health and Safety Requirements [here](#).

To help our elected officials and non-elected appointing authorities become familiar with the new safety measures, the Administrative Office of the Courts will offer regional trainings next week via Zoom. Representatives from the Director's Office, Finance & Administration, Human Resources and Legal Services will discuss the new guidelines and answer your questions. The AOC will email an invitation and schedule of trainings later this afternoon.

I appreciate your ongoing flexibility and support as this situation continues to evolve. As you know, the majority of court matters are not voluntary. People can choose whether to eat at a restaurant or go shopping, but in most instances they don't get to choose whether they go to court. We're incorporating as many of the governor's requirements as possible into our orders to maintain a high standard of safety for our employees, elected officials and the public.

We look forward to answering your questions during the regional trainings next week. For other matters, you can email your questions to covid19@kycourts.net and find updates at [COVID-19 and the Courts](#).



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