

Protective Measures Implemented in the Courthouse for In-Person Proceedings

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Criminal and Domestic Violence Divisions will continue to conduct the majority of court hearings remotely using video and teleconferencing technology. However, some proceedings in criminal cases must occur in person to protect the defendant's constitutional rights. The Court has taken extensive steps to protect the health and safety of all trial participants, including the attorneys, witnesses, court staff, judges, members of the public and the defendant.

The Superior Court is working closely with both an epidemiologist and an environmental hygienist to implement safeguards throughout the courthouse and in the courtrooms where the trials will be conducted. These protections include, but are not limited to:

Required Face Coverings: Everyone in the courthouse must wear a mask or other face covering at all times, unless a medical or religious reason prevents them from doing so. If a person does not have a face covering or mask, the court will provide one. The court will also provide witnesses with a clear face mask for their use while testifying.

Maximization of Physical Distancing: In-person proceedings will be in the largest courtrooms to permit physical distancing between all participants, including attorneys, witnesses, defendants and members of the public. A separate courtroom and/or witness room has been designated as witness waiting areas. Seating has been rearranged to ensure appropriate spacing and the number of people allowed in each courtroom limited; public access to the proceedings is available online if the courtroom reaches maximum capacity. The court will utilize technology to facilitate contactless exchange and presentation of exhibits and enable confidential communication between defense counsel and defendant.

Installation of Plexiglass Barriers: plexiglass barriers have been installed in the courtrooms, including around the witness stand and the tables for defendants and lawyers. Additional plexiglass barriers can be repositioned to create a further physical safeguard to supplement face coverings and physical distancing.

Personal Protective Equipment. In addition to requiring and providing face coverings, the court will place hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes and gloves on the witness stand and throughout the courtroom.

Enhanced Cleaning: The courtrooms, witness rooms and restrooms will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected each evening.

Improvements to the ventilation system: all air filters have been replaced with high performance MERV 13 filters, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control, and the Court has upgraded existing ultraviolet and ionization equipment in its ventilation systems.

The Court will continue to take additional measures to protect the health and safety of all individuals in the courthouse, as recommended.