



Resuming Court Operations in Courtrooms and Court-Controlled Spaces

Background

To allow for a resumption of court services that is safe for the public and court employees, all courtrooms and court-controlled spaces must have adequate protective measures in place. This requirement applies to public spaces and work spaces used by the Iowa Judicial Branch in courthouses as well as other county-owned facilities. In cooperation with the Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC), best practices are being developed for mitigating exposure to Covid-19 in all public spaces of courthouses and other county-owned facilities housing judicial branch operations. These best practices will be made available in a separate document. Judicial officials should work with county officials for each particular courthouse or other facility to encourage the implementation of these best practices to the greatest degree possible.

Required Preparations by Iowa Judicial Branch

Pursuant to the May 22, 2020 supreme court supervisory order, nonjury trials may commence July 13, 2020 or earlier if the county courthouse or county-owned facility used by the judicial branch is open to the public and the court operations in that county meet recommended COVID-19 safety protocols as established by state court administration. All chief judges must complete a Checklist for Resuming Court Operations for each county facility in their judicial district where court operations are conducted and submit them to the state court administrator for approval before July 13, 2020.

In the event a previously approved courtroom or court-controlled space is no longer in compliance with the Checklist for Resuming Court Operations, its chief district court judge shall immediately contact the state court administrator to discuss and implement appropriate steps to be taken for continuation/resumption of court services.

NOTE: Upon completion of the Jump Start Jury Task Force, this document will be amended to include preparations for commencing jury trial operations.

CHECKLIST FOR RESUMING COURT OPERATIONS

District Number _____ Name of County _____

1. Facility Status

The courthouse or other county facility where judicial operations take place is open to the public.

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Staffing Schedule

A staffing schedule has been prepared so that social distancing/PPE is maintained in all court controlled workspaces. For example, where desks or work stations cannot be reconfigured to maintain 6' or more of social distancing, a rotation schedule is in place so that only a certain number of employees are onsite at a given time and other employees work remotely until they are scheduled to work onsite.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Shift start/stop times, break times, and lunchtimes are staggered to minimize the congregating of employees in any areas.

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Workspace/Work Environment Safety

Work stations and desks in office suites are configured so that 6' of social distancing is maintained or a staffing schedule addresses social distancing.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Shared equipment such as conference phones, audiovisual equipment, copiers or file cabinets are spaced to allow social distancing during use, and PPE is available near shared equipment to wipe down touchpoints after use.

☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Courtrooms/Overflow Rooms

Courtroom spaces are configured so that at least 6' of distance separates all participants in court proceedings and the gallery has been marked or cordoned off so that occupancy is limited to where people maintain 6' of distance between each other in all directions. ***No permanent physical changes shall be made without the approval of the county.***

☐ Yes ☐ No

If overflow rooms are needed, an effort will be made to accommodate public viewing by discussing technology options with JBIT and implementing a plan with state court administration.

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Case Scheduling and Processing

There are limits on the number of hearings in a given time period.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Cases are scheduled in such numbers so that 6' of social distancing is always being maintained by all occupants within the courtroom and for those queuing outside the courtroom.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Other arrangements have been made to maintain the number of individuals present for court proceedings at any given time. Some examples include the following:

- Additional reporting locations within the facility for queuing
- Checking-in court participants and asking them to wait in their cars or locations nearby and then texting them to report to the courtroom when ready
- The use of larger auditorium type spaces within the community

☐ Yes ☐ No

6. Public Terminal Kiosks

Public terminal kiosks are spaced to maintain 6' of social distancing.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Keyboard protectors are in place for all public kiosks.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Hand sanitizer and spray disinfectant or wipes are available for all public kiosks.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Signage is posted instructing users how to appropriately wipe down the terminal after each use.

☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Clerk of Court and District Court Services

A system has been developed to allow people to schedule an appointment to receive services in order to minimize the number of people congregating within or outside offices at any given time.

☐ Yes ☐ No

8. PPE

There is an adequate supply of face masks on site so that every employee replaces mask daily.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Face shields are available for all employees who requested one through the employee survey.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Face shields are available for the use of every witness for the number of trials occurring within the facility at any given time, and procedures are in place for cleaning and storing the shields after each use.

☐ Yes ☐ No

There is an adequate supply of hand sanitizer available on site for each office suite and courtroom.

☐ Yes ☐ No

There is an adequate supply of disposable gloves for each office suite.

☐ Yes ☐ No

There is an adequate supply of spray disinfectant or wipes in each courtroom to be used for cleaning counsel tables and witness areas after each use.

☐ Yes ☐ No

A protocol is in place for employees to clean and disinfect their personal workstation at the beginning and the end of every shift.

☐ Yes ☐ No

9. Signage

The following signs are posted at the entrances of courtrooms and court controlled spaces advising the public to abide by the following:

“Do NOT enter if any of the following apply:

- 1. You have recently been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19.*
- 2. You have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days.*
- 3. You are experiencing symptoms of Covid-19 per CDC Guidelines”*

☐ Yes ☐ No

“Upon entering, please maintain 6’ of distance in all directions between yourself and others.”

☐ Yes ☐ No

“A mask must be worn when entering this space.”

☐ Yes ☐ No

“The number of people permitted in the courtroom/office is (X).”

☐ Yes ☐ No

10. Contact Tracing

The Judicial Branch's policy on contact tracing has been reviewed and will be followed should the need arise.

☐ Yes ☐ No

The responses above accurately reflect the preparations that have been taken for reopening courtrooms and court controlled spaces in the above noted county.

Chief Judge /District No.

Date

Print Name

APPROVED BY:

Todd Nuccio
State Court Administrator

Date