

## **The 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Courts move into Phase Two of operations**

Chief Judge Michael T. McHugh signed off on the Twentieth Judicial Circuit's Operational Plan. Lee, Collier, Charlotte, and Glades counties have met all criteria in Supreme Court Order AOSC20-32 to transition from Phase One (current) to Phase Two beginning Monday, June 1, 2020. There were two confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 in a non-court entity at the Hendry County Courthouse. Once deep cleaning of the areas have taken place, all criteria for Hendry County will be met.

The Operational Plan (Second Amended Administrative Order 2.39) expands in-person court proceedings with the use of protective measures. Remote technology is strongly encouraged and will still be used as an alternative to in-person proceedings to limit and minimize person-to-person contact.

Anyone entering the 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit courthouses are required to wear face masks or appropriate face coverings at all times throughout the buildings, including courtrooms, as mandated by the Florida Supreme Court. There are no exceptions. Anyone without a face mask will be provided with one at no cost. All persons entering are also subject to a health and safety screening. This includes a temperature scan and limited inquiries regarding potential respiratory illness. People with a fever above 100.4 degrees or who answers yes to the screening questions will not be allowed to enter the courthouse. These people will be directed to an Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) employee stationed at each entrance who will make alternative arrangements. We ask that only those with official court business, scheduled proceedings, and appointments visit any of our courthouses or court facilities. More precise details are outlined in the Operational Plan.

While inside and outside the courthouses, people must maintain six feet of distance from others. A queuing area has been established outside each of the buildings with social distancing markings. Decals have also been placed throughout the courthouses to maintain social distancing. The galleries of all courtrooms have been measured and the seating has been marked to maintain the required six feet distance. The only people allowed in courtrooms will be limited to those essential to the proceedings, which includes attorneys, parties, necessary witnesses, and the media. The number of people inside elevators, lobbies, and other public areas will also be limited. Hand sanitizer will be widely available for use throughout the courthouses to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

In Phase Two, all essential/critical and non-essential and non-critical court proceedings shall be conducted remotely via teleconferencing, videoconferencing or other means. However priority will be given to Violation of Probation Hearings, Out-of-Custody Pleas, and all Evidentiary Hearings in Criminal cases on whether to be conducted in-person or a hybrid setting. All hearings previously outlined in Phase One will continue to be conducted in the same manner as they were previously.

There is no change to Civil and Family hearings from Phase One and those shall be held remotely unless the Administrative Judge of the division or county finds that a remote hearing is impossible or would violate due process.

**Twentieth Judicial Circuit Administrative Office of the Courts**

**COVID-19 Advisory #10**

**05/29/2020**

There is also a Phase Three in the Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice's plan and a Phase Four, which would be a complete return to normalcy. Chief Judge McHugh and AOC management staff continue to consult with our Administrative Judges, justice partners and local health department officials in all five counties to provide for a safe, gradual, phased-in approach for the resumption of court proceedings that ensures everyone's safety and welfare.

This Administrative Order supersedes all other Administrative Orders and directives and is effective immediately.

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