

Revisions to Twentieth Judicial Circuit COVID-19 Operational Plan

Masks and social distancing are no longer required in any of our courthouses as of June 21

Chief Judge Michael T. McHugh has signed off on what is expected to be the final Administrative Order addressing the Twentieth Judicial Circuit's COVID-19 Operational Plan. The new Administrative Order vacates the previous Mitigating Measures in Response to COVID-19. This is in accordance with the Florida Supreme Court Administrative Order signed on June 4 by Chief Justice Charles Canady. The order allows courts around Florida to lift requirements to wear masks and distance from others while in courtrooms during in-person proceedings beginning on June 21.

Any person may voluntarily choose to wear a face mask in our courthouses and, if requested, a face mask will be provided at no cost. Court participants may also request to be physically distanced and the court will address such a request as appropriate under the circumstances at the time of the request.

The order allows more in-person court events and prioritizes jury trials, with criminal cases taking precedence. However, remote technology is still strongly encouraged and will still be used as an alternative to in-person proceedings, when appropriate, to facilitate the efficient and expeditious processing of cases.

Hearings to determine if an individual should be involuntarily committed under the Baker Act or the Marchman Act must be conducted in-person unless that individual waives the right to physical presence at the hearing.

The order also sets a schedule for an end to the suspension of speedy trial deadlines. Speedy trial rules for defendants arrested before March 14, 2020, will resume Oct 4. This also pertains to Speedy trial in juvenile court proceedings and in non-criminal traffic infraction court proceedings. For those arrested after March 14, 2020, speedy trial provisions will resume Jan. 3, 2022.

This Administrative Order supersedes all other Administrative Orders and directives and is effective June 21, 2021.

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