



DALLAS COUNTY

HON. MARICELA MOORE, LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT JUDGE

Re: COVID-19 Health Protocols for All Business in the George Allen Courthouse

The Courts in the George Allen Courthouse (“Courthouse”) have adopted the Covid-19 Risk Metric for resuming in-person proceedings as follows:

Covid-19 Risk Metric for Resuming In-Person Proceedings

Red (Stay Home, Stay Safe)

When Dallas County is operating at a Covid-19 Red Risk Level, the courts in the George Allen Courthouse will refrain from conducting in-person jury trials and in-person court proceedings. The courts will limit all business to remote-only proceedings.

Orange (Extreme Caution)

When Dallas County is operating at a Covid-19 Orange Risk Level, the courts in the George Allen Courthouse will operate with reduced attendance. In-person proceedings are allowed, however, courts are strongly encouraged to conduct proceedings remotely. Courts are also strongly encouraged to limit in-person proceedings to cases in which litigants or other court participants are unable to successfully and effectively participate in remote hearings. Additionally, courts will conduct a limited number of in-person jury trials according to a schedule adopted by the presiding judges of the courts. The schedule will limit the jury trials to one per floor/per wing of the George Allen Courthouse on any given day.

Covid-19 Minimum Standards for In-Person Proceedings

When in-person proceedings resume according to the Covid-19 Risk Metric, the following minimum standards must be followed by all those who enter George Allen Courthouse. Judges may enact more stringent standards in their courtroom, but may not have less stringent standards.

Judges and Court Staff

Courts shall take precautions to ensure judges and court staff do not enter the courthouse when there is a likelihood that they have contracted Covid-19 or have been recently exposed to Covid-19. Courts should encourage teleworking for court staff whenever possible and feasible.

Vulnerable Populations

Vulnerable individuals and those who live with or are caregivers for vulnerable individuals must be given the option to appear virtually before the court. Judges should include with any notice of a court setting information on how vulnerable individuals can request an accommodation. Vulnerable individuals include those over the age of 65 and individuals with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and

those whose immune systems are compromised, such as chemotherapy for cancer, or other conditions requiring such therapy.

Screening

All individuals will be screened for Covid-19 symptoms and exposure at the time they enter the Central Jury Room and when they enter a courtroom. All individuals will complete the Covid-19 Questionnaire, a copy of which is included with these procedures.

Individuals shall not be permitted to enter the Courthouse if they are feeling feverish or with measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.0 F, or with new or worsening signs or symptoms of Covid-19, such as fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. Individuals shall not be permitted to enter the Courthouse if they have had a recent exposure to Covid-19.

Social Distancing

All those who enter the Courthouse shall follow the CDC Guidelines on proper social distancing. All public areas, such as the Courthouse entrance, all lobbies and waiting areas in the Courthouse, security lines, areas outside of elevators, elevator banks, bathrooms, the Central Jury Room, all courtrooms, jury rooms, and all other areas where individuals gather, will have a limit on the number of individuals who can be present at any given time. The maximum number that may be present will be limited to the Dallas County Fire Marshal's recommendation on the number of individuals who can fit into a given space while complying with the CDC social distancing recommendation.

Face Coverings

Masks will be provided at the entrance to the Courthouse. All those who enter the Courthouse shall use a face mask. Court participants who may need to lower their face masks for a short period of time while speaking will be required to wear a face shield, in addition to a face mask. Face shields will be provided to the presiding judges for use in the courtrooms.

Hygiene

Hand sanitizers will be made available at the entrance of each courtroom, as well as at various locations around the Courthouse.

Cleaning

Sanitizing of all areas in the courthouse, including the courtrooms and jury rooms, will be performed regularly. When a transition of participants occurs in the courtroom (such as between hearings), the courtroom will be sanitized.

Summoning Jurors

Jury services will include with juror summonses information on precautions that have been taken to protect the health and safety of prospective jurors and a Covid-19 screening questionnaire.

All courts will liberally grant a request for excuse from service for any prospective juror who has been potentially exposed, who is symptomatic, and who is a vulnerable individual.

Jury Selection

Jury selection will take place in the Central Jury Room. Only one court will conduct jury selection at a given time. Once the jury is sworn in, the remaining members of the venire panel will be excused. The trial will resume in the courtroom in accordance with the policy that limits jury trials to one per floor/per wing of the George Allen Courthouse on any given day.

Trial and Deliberation

All aspects of the trial and all trial breaks will take place in areas of the courthouse that allow for adequate social distancing in compliance with CDC social distancing recommendations. The courtrooms will be modified to comply with CDC social distancing recommendations, while at the same time allowing the jurors, judge, and attorneys to see the witness and parties during all aspects of the trial. Special attention will be paid to the placement of evidence so that all jurors, the judge, and the witness can see the information while it is being displayed. Courts must conduct side bar and other private conversations in a space that allows for social distancing.

Microphone Protection Protocols

All microphones that are shared in the courtroom will be cleaned between users and disposable microphone covers will be placed on shared microphones and will be changed between users.

Exhibit and Evidence Management

To the extent possible, courts will limit the use of paper exhibits by converting it to a digital format. When physical or paper exhibits are used, courts should reduce the exchange of the exhibit to the number of persons necessary and shall prohibit the passing of the exhibit to the jurors during the trial.

Prior to jury deliberation, to the extent possible, all exhibits will be disinfected before being provided to the jury for use during jury deliberation. To the extent possible, the jury should be provided with digital copies of the evidence to use during deliberations.

Food Precautions

To the extent possible, courts should provide lunch, snacks and drinks to the jurors during the service in order to limit the need for jurors to leave the courthouse while serving.

The following questionnaire will be included with the Juror Summons

JURY SERVICE COVID-19 PRE-SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Prospective Juror:

As part of the court's ongoing measures to protect against the spread of COVID-19 disease, we ask that you complete the following before reporting for Jury Service. Bring this completed questionnaire with you.

1. **SYMPTOMS WITHIN THE PAST TWO WEEKS.** Check any that apply to YOU OR A MEMEBER OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD.

Fever (above 100.0) Change in taste or smell Cough Nausea or Vomiting

Headache Shortness of Breath/Difficulty Breathing Diarrhea Chills

Muscle pain or body aches Sore throat Fatigue Congestion or Runny Nose

I certify that NONE of the symptoms above have been experienced by me or a member of my household in the past 14 days.

IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING ANY OF THE ABOVE SYMPTOMS, CALL JURY SERVICES AT 214-653-6233 BEFORE REPORTING.

2. **CONTACT HISTORY** – check any that apply to YOU or A MEMBER OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD:

I or a member of my household has been diagnosed with COVID-19 within the last 4 months:

I or a member of my household has been in close contact with someone exposed to or infected with COVID-19 I the last 14 days:

I or a member of my household are currently on a watch list or self-quarantining because of possible COVID-19 exposure:

NONE of the above apply.

IF ANY OF THE ABOVE APPLY, CALL JURY SERVICES AT 214-653-6233 BEFORE REPORTING.

3. **COVID-19 RELATED EXCUSE OR POSTPONEMENT** – Individuals who are over age 65 and individuals with underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised, such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring therapy, are considered to be vulnerable populations and may request to postpone or be excused form jury service at this time. If you wish to be excused or request that your jury service be postpone, check the box below.

I certify that I meet the above-described conditions and I am requesting to be excused from jury service or desire to have my service date postponed because of those conditions.

IF YOU ARE REQUESTING TO BE EXCUSED OR YOUR SERVICE DATE BE POSTPONED DUE TO A COVID-19 RELATED REASON, CALL JURY SERVICES AT 214-653-6233.

4. FACE COVERINGS:

Prospective jurors are required to wear a face covering while they are in the courthouse. Individuals are encouraged to bring a cloth face covering with them. If an individual does not have a cloth face covering, a disposable mask will be provided.

I certify the above is true and correct:

Signature

Printed Name

The following questionnaire will be completed by each court participant

IN PERSON COURT PROCEEDINGS COVID-19 PRE-SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

ALL COURT PARTICIPANTS:

As part of the court's ongoing measures to protect against the spread of COVID-19 disease, we ask that you complete the following prior to appearing in person before in the courtroom.

1. **SYMPTOMS NOW OR WITHIN THE PAST TWO WEEKS:** check any that apply to YOU OR A MEMEBER OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD.

Fever (above 100.0) Change in taste or smell Cough Nausea or Vomiting

Headache Shortness of Breath/Difficulty Breathing Diarrhea Chills

Muscle pain or body aches Sore throat Fatigue Congestion or Runny Nose

I certify that NONE of the symptoms above have been experienced by me or a member of my household in the past two weeks.

IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING ANY OF THE ABOVE SYMPTOMS, INFORM THE BAILIFF BEFORE ENTERING THE COURTROOM.

2. **CONTACT HISTORY** – check any that apply to YOU or A MEMBER OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD:

I or a member of my household has been diagnosed with COVID-19 within the last 4 months:

I or a member of my household has been in close contact with someone exposed to or infected with COVID-19 I the last 14 days:

I or a member of my household are currently on a watch list or self-quarantining because of possible COVID-19 exposure:

NONE of the above apply.

IF ANY OF THE ABOVE APPLY, INFORM THE BAILIFF BEFORE ENTERING THE COURTROOM.

3. **COVID-19 RELATED EXCUSE OR POSTPONEMENT** – Individuals who are over age 65 and individuals with underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised, such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring therapy, are considered to be vulnerable populations. If you wish to be excused from appearing before the court in person or request that your appearance be postponed, check the box below.

I certify that I meet the above-described conditions and I am requesting a postponement of my in person appearance in court.

4. FACE COVERINGS:

All counsel, parties and witnesses are required to wear a face covering while they are in the courthouse. Individuals are encouraged to bring a cloth face covering with them. If an individual does not have a cloth face covering, a disposable mask will be provided.

I certify the above is true and correct:

Signature

Printed Name