

Update for October 29, 2020

Justices, Judges, Circuit Court Clerks and Kentucky Court of Justice Personnel:

Guidelines for COVID precautions in ‘red zones’ as cases surge this fall and winter

I hope this email finds you safe and well as we head into our eighth month of the pandemic. I want you to know how proud I am of your perseverance as we find ourselves fighting “COVID fatigue.” I recognize that having to conduct remote proceedings, enforce social distancing, and sanitize courtrooms and workspaces is wearing thin but, even so, you continue to forge ahead with your dockets and safety measures.

As you know, health experts have warned that this fall and winter will be the darkest days of the pandemic. With the coronavirus surging in Kentucky and across the country, I want to encourage all of you to remain vigilant and take the necessary precautions to protect yourselves, your co-workers and the people we serve. I also urge you to review the mandates in Supreme Court Administrative Orders [2020-63](#) and [2020-64](#) regarding our health and safety requirements and court procedures.

Our ability to keep courts open to in-person proceedings depends on judges, circuit court clerks and court employees complying with public health guidelines and requiring the same of everyone who enters our facilities. That’s even more important when counties move into the “red zone,” which measures the prevalence of the virus in the community and the likelihood of increased transmission. To ensure we’re taking the necessary precautions based on each county’s status, the Supreme Court has approved the following considerations for local court officials:

Guidelines for Red-Zone Monitoring in Your County

You are encouraged to check your county’s COVID status on a weekly basis on the [Kentucky Coronavirus Monitoring Map](#). If your county falls into a COVID “red zone,” which is defined as 25 or more cases per 100,000, the following recommendations apply:

Court Proceedings.All court proceedings should be conducted remotely.

Jury Trials.Jury trials should be postponed until your county returns to the yellow zone.

Offices of Circuit Court Clerk.Circuit clerks should close their offices to in-person services. All filings should be mailed, eFiled or conventionally filed using a drop box provided outside the judicial facility. All payments for court costs, fines, fees and restitution should be made by money order mailed to the Office of Circuit Court Clerk or by cash or credit card by calling the office..

Access to Court Facilities. Access to court facilities should be limited to attorneys and parties required to attend emergency, in-person hearings and individuals seeking emergency protective orders, interpersonal protective orders and emergency custody orders.

Masks and Social Distancing. Proper use of facial coverings and social distancing while in court facilities should be strictly enforced.

Teleworking. All KCOJ employees who are able to telework should be encouraged to do so.

I have been impressed time and again since March as I've watched you do whatever it takes to keep the courts open and serving the public. That kind of long-term determination is difficult to sustain and yet you get up every day and do it all over again. Thank you for mustering up the fortitude and commitment to continue our important work. I appreciate each one of you.

If you have any questions about the court system's response to the pandemic, please send them to COVIDcourtconcerns@kycourts.net.