

Updated Operating Protocols  
Town and Village Courts  
Effective December 9, 2020  
District 7

For the past many months, the Unified Court System has permitted in-person proceedings in accordance with the Governor's un-PAUSE New York plan. Foot traffic in the courthouses has been gradually increased to correspond with an improvement in the metrics measuring the spread of the Coronavirus. Recently, the metrics have indicated the need to once again reduce foot traffic in the courthouses to protect the health and safety of litigants, lawyers, court staff and judges. Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence Marks' Memorandum dated November 13, 2020 is incorporated herein and this document is intended to provide enhanced guidance thereto.

Commencing December 9, 2020 all Town and Village Court operations in the 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District of the State of New York shall be conducted pursuant to this Plan. **If a matter is not specifically mentioned below, the Court MAY NOT hear the matter in person.**

I. Courthouse Operations

- A. Occupancy of all courtrooms shall be limited to the lesser of 10 people or 25% of the posted room occupancy per code.
- B. There shall be a maximum of 10 court users in the courtroom at any one time. This includes lawyers/litigants/spectators, but does not include any court personnel or security.
- C. All current safety measures and protocols will continue.

II. Court Proceedings

- A. No new prospective trial jurors (criminal or civil) will be summoned for jury service until further notice. Commenced criminal and civil jury trials will continue to conclusion.
- B. No new bench trials and hearings in civil and criminal cases will be conducted. Bench trials and hearings may only be conducted after a request is made to the Administrative Judge and Deputy Chief Administrative Judge. Exception: Preliminary Hearings in Criminal Court may be heard in-person pursuant to the Updated Operating Protocols Effective November 23, 2020, allowing the defendant to appear virtually from the jail.
- C. Judges may conduct in person off hour arraignments. In counties with a CAP, the arraignments shall occur with the Judge presiding at the CAP. In all other counties, necessary arraignments shall occur at the Town or Village Court.
- D. Judges may conduct arraignments of in-custody defendants, allowing the defendant to appear virtually from the jail.
- E. Judges may conduct arraignments where the Court is notified of a request for an arraignment by either the prosecution or the defense.
- F. Judges are encouraged to more robustly conference criminal matters virtually/telephonically and if acceptable disposition is reached, plea affidavits are strongly encouraged. Please work with your ADA and defense counsel on procedure. These matters may not be handled in person.
- G. Judges are encouraged to use a mail-in plea bargaining disposition process that would allow a defendant charged with a VTL infraction to proceed without a personal appearance. Please work with your ADA and defense counsel on procedure.
- H. While currently there exists no Executive Order nor statutory directive that would excuse a failure to appear or prevent a judge from suspending a motorist's license for failing to appear at a court session, Judges are encouraged to utilize their judicial discretion when considering the suspension of a motorist's license for failure to appear.