

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER  
GOVERNING COURTHOUSE COMPLEX ACCESS AND RESTRICTIONS  
DURING COVID-19 PHASED RE-OPENING**

**WHEREAS**, a public health emergency exists based upon the outbreak of the coronavirus, COVID-19; and

**WHEREAS**, commencing on March 17, 2020, by Administrative Order of Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera of the Maryland Court of Appeals, all courts in the Maryland Judiciary were restricted to emergency operations and closed with limited exceptions, pending further Order by the Chief Judge; and

**WHEREAS**, on May 22, 2020 Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera issued the Administrative Order on the Progressive Resumption of Full Function of Judiciary Operations Previously Restricted Due to the COVID-19 Emergency, which delineated a five phase approach to re-opening Maryland courts (the "Court Re-Opening Plan), to progress from emergency operations toward full operational functions, while employing safety measures and monitoring local health conditions to continue to support the health and safety of Maryland residents and Judiciary personnel; and

**WHEREAS**, the Circuit Court for Prince George's County established a six (6) phase plan consistent for the most part with the Maryland Judiciary Plan, and

**WHEREAS**, each of the first five phases of the Court Re-Opening Plan represents an increase in the level of operation within the courthouse, with Phase I designated as the present state where the courthouse is closed to the public, with limited exceptions and designated emergencies are being handled remotely; and

**WHEREAS**, the timing for progression between Phases in the Court Re-Opening Plan may be adjusted based upon current local public health conditions, but is presumptively set as follows: Phase II commences on June 5, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.; Phase III commences on July 20, 2020; Phase IV commences on August 31, 2020; Phase V, which is a resumption of jury trials, commences on October 5, 2020; and Phase VI, which shall commence when COVID-19 is identified as contained and no longer impacting court operations; and

**WHEREAS**, in Phase II of the Court Re-Opening Plan, the courthouse continues to remain closed to the public with limited exceptions, but the scope of matters that can be heard remotely and virtually is expanded; and

**WHEREAS**, as the court enters each new Phase of the Court Re-Opening Plan, the activity within the courthouse will increase; and

**WHEREAS**, consistent with guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control, the Maryland Department of Health, and the County's local Health Department, the current public health emergency will continue through this phased re-opening, so measures must be taken to mitigate the potential for exposure for individuals visiting all buildings in the Court Complex (the Courthouse, the Judiciary Administrative Services Building and the Family Justice Center) and for the judiciary personnel; and

**WHEREAS**, in light of the phased Court Re-Opening Plan, expanded health and safety measures are required to limit exposure and to prevent the spread of COVID-19, in order to ensure the safety and well-being of Court Complex employees, counsel, litigants and the public who enter the courthouse;

**NOW THEREFORE**, it is on this 5<sup>th</sup> day of June 2020, by the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, Maryland,

**ORDERED** as follows:

**I: Court Complex Admission**

During Phase I and Phase II of the Court Re-Opening Plan, the Court Complex remains generally closed to the public. Courthouse entry during these Phases is limited to courthouse employees or others with offices within the courthouse; within the Court Complex, counsel, parties and necessary witnesses appearing for a case scheduled on the court docket in the courthouse; credentialed members of the press appearing for a matter scheduled on the court docket only; and others approved as appropriate by the Chief and Administrative Judge.

During Phase I and II, the Clerk's Office will remain closed to the public, except by appointment pursuant to policies established by the Clerk of the Circuit Court; A public drop box for filing will continue to be located at the Commissioner's entrance to the courthouse for 24-hour filings. A drop box will also continue to be located at the

Judiciary Administrative Services (JAS) Building for Land Records and other Business Licenses matters.

During Phases III through V, filings may still be left in a drop box at the Commissioner's Entrance and at the Judiciary Administrative Services (JAS) Building (Land Records and Business Licenses only);

## **II. Required Health Screening Upon Entry**

The Office of the Sheriff for Prince George's County (the "Sheriff's Office") shall employ heightened Court Complex entry screenings during Phases I through V of the Court Re-Opening Plan, as follows:

- All persons entering any building within the Court Complex are required to respond to health screening questions to determine (1) whether they are experiencing any acute respiratory illness, flu-like symptoms, fever, coughing or sneezing; and (2) whether they have been in contact within the past seven days with someone experiencing flu-like symptoms or a diagnosis of COVID-19 without wearing personal protective equipment. These health screening questions will be displayed at each entry to the building. Any person who responds affirmatively to either of these questions shall be refused entry into the courthouse;
- All persons entering the building are subject to a touchless thermal temperature check with available equipment. Any person who has an elevated temperature of 100.0 degrees or greater shall be refused entry into the courthouse;
- All persons over the age of two entering the courthouse shall wear face mask or other covering over their nose and mouth ("face covering"). A face covering must be worn continuously by any person in a public area within the courthouse, or in an office or workspace within a six-foot distance of another person. This requirement extends to appearances in courtrooms except when speaking, at the discretion of the Judge.
- Any person who is refused entry based upon any health screening criteria, and who is scheduled to appear as counsel, a party, or a witness in a scheduled proceeding, shall provide contact information via the kiosk located at each entrance, that will be forwarded to the appropriate office or court. The presiding

judicial officer shall then determine whether the scheduled matter will be postponed, or whether arrangements can be made for remote participation by the person who was refused entry. The presiding judicial officer will communicate with the Sheriff's Office or the designated e-mail to provide further direction to the person who was refused entry.

- The Sheriff's Office shall deny entry to the courthouse to any person who refuses to comply with the screening process or who refuses to wear a face covering.

### **Courtrooms and Secure Areas**

- Each courtroom, hearing room and waiting area in the courthouse will have signage posted to limit capacity based upon current social distancing recommendations, which limits will be enforced by judicial officers or members of the Office of the Sheriff;
- Social distancing markers will be placed in the gallery areas in courtrooms and in waiting rooms to reinforce social distancing requirements;
- Overflow from any courtroom will be asked to wait with appropriate social distancing in a hallway or other locations designated by the Chief and Administrative Judge;
- Access to secure hallways and chambers is restricted to staff unless otherwise authorized by a judicial officer;
- Any person who refuses to comply with social distancing requirements is subject to removal from the courthouse by the Sheriff's Office.

### **Inmate Transportation and Care**

- An inmate may not be transported to the courthouse if the inmate: (1) is in quarantine within prison or detention facility; (2) tests positive for COVID-19; (3) exhibits signs of illness; or (4) has a temperature greater than 100.0 degrees;
- All inmates transported to the courthouse are subject to temperature screening by a touchless thermometer prior to transport;
- Inmates shall wear face coverings during transport and while in the courthouse;
- Inmates will be housed in lockups with proper social distancing, to the extent possible.

### **Court Complex Staff Obligations**

- Court staff experiencing any sign or symptom of illness must stay home from work;
- Court staff must employ proper social distancing;
- Court staff must wear face coverings in a manner consistent with this Administrative Order;

### **COVID-19 Positive Testing Reporting Requirements**

- Any employee who tests positive for COVID-19, or who has been advised by medical personnel that he or she is presumptively positive, shall self-report immediately to his or her Administrative Head, self-quarantine, and not return to the Court Complex until cleared by his or her Administrative Head;
- Any employee who has been in contact with an individual who tested positive for COVID-19, or who has been advised by medical personnel that he or she is presumptively positive, shall quarantine for 14 days or as otherwise directed by a County Health Officer; and it is further

**SO ORDERED.**



SHEILA R. TILLERSON ADAMS  
Chief and Administrative Judge

Copies emailed to:

Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera  
Circuit Court for Prince George's County Bench  
Prince George's County Senior Judges  
The Honorable Lisa Hall Johnson, District Court Administrative Judge  
The Honorable Mahasin El Amin, Clerk of the Court  
Sheriff Melvin High  
Captain Cooper  
Circuit Court Division Directors  
Circuit Court Magistrates  
Stephanye R. Maxwell, Esq., CPM, Court Administrator  
Erica M. Payne-Santiago, Deputy Court Administrator  
The Honorable Aisha Braveboy, State's Attorney  
Keith Lotridge, District Public Defender  
Delmonica Hawkins, Regional Director, DJS  
Tanique Brown-Keene, Parole and Probation

Samantha L. Barrett, Parole and Probation  
Wanda Greeley, Assessment and Taxation  
Gloria Brown Burnett, Department of Social Services  
Samantha Philips, Office of Child Support and Enforcement  
Dennis Gwinn, Office of the Comptroller  
Honorable Cereta Lee, Register of Wills  
Honorable Wendy Cartwright, Orphans Court  
Dorothy Lennig, House of Ruth  
Jessica Quincosa, Community Legal Services  
Prince George's County Bar Association  
J. Franklyn Bourne Bar Association  
Rhonda L. Weaver, County Attorney, Office of Law

By: Bridget M. Gazelle, Executive Administrative Assistant  
Chambers of the Honorable Sheila R. Tillerson Adams