



[No. 5AO2021-09]

**TWELFTH AMENDED OPERATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER  
FIFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT**

Pursuant to the authority vested in me, and in accordance with the recent operational protocols issued by the Chief Administrative Judge for the trial courts of the Unified Court System, I hereby order that, effective **February 22, 2021**, the attached Updated Operating Protocols be put into effect in the Fifth Judicial District.

Dated: February 19, 2021  
Syracuse, New York

  
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Hon. James P. Murphy  
Administrative Judge, Fifth Judicial District

Distribution:  
HON. VITO C. CARUSO

**5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District**  
**Updated Operating Protocols**  
**(Effective February 22, 2021)**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our courts have remained open although there have been periods of time that have required modifications to court operations based upon virus metrics. Early on, the courts dramatically reduced in-person proceedings, limiting those proceedings to essential matters. In the late Spring and into the Fall of 2020, the Unified Court System progressed to permitting in-person proceedings in accordance with the Governor's un-PAUSE New York plan. Foot traffic in the courthouses was gradually increased to correspond with an improvement in the metrics measuring the spread of the Coronavirus. Later in the Fall of 2020, the metrics indicated the need to reduce foot traffic again in the courthouses to protect the health and safety of litigants, lawyers, court staff and judges. Courts again decreased in-person proceedings in order to protect the health and safety of all court users, court staff and judges and to further reduce the community spread of the Coronavirus. Currently, the metrics once again indicate an opportunity to increase in-person proceedings in the courthouses and while the "normal" remains a virtual appearance, certain in-person proceedings identified below are now permitted where access to justice and court operations require an in-person proceeding. The metrics will continue to be monitored. The court system remains nimble and ready to quickly adapt operations as health and safety conditions warrant.

**In any District, the Administrative Judge may, based upon local conditions, enact more restrictive operational protocols as deemed appropriate by the Administrative Judge.**

These Updated Protocols supersede the Updated Operating Protocols Effective December 9, 2020.

**Commencing February 22, 2021**, all court operations in the 5th Judicial District of the State of New York shall be conducted pursuant to these Updated Protocols. To the extent the provisions of this Updated Operating Protocol are inconsistent with provisions in the 5th Judicial District Eleventh Amended Administrative Order (Corrected) signed on December 21, 2020 and any previously issued memoranda, the provisions of this Protocol should be relied upon to guide operations.

**I. COURTHOUSE OPERATIONS**

**A. Scheduling**

1. Calendar times shall be staggered so that different courts (e.g. Family, Criminal, etc.) in the same building start at different times.
2. Each Judge may hold in-person proceedings on two days each week, subject to clerk staff, courtroom space and time availability, unless an exception is requested and granted by the Administrative Judge. A judge presiding over any hearing or trial that continues to an additional day or days shall be granted additional courtroom time. The

scheduling shall be as coordinated by the Supervising Judges and Chief Clerks to assure appropriate limiting of foot traffic.

3. In each court, there shall be a **maximum of 10 cases/proceedings scheduled in-person per hour**, except as stated below in Sections (II)(B)(9) and (II)(B)(11).

B. Occupancy of all courtrooms shall be limited to the lesser of 20 people or ½ the posted room occupancy per Code. An exception shall be granted for jury trials or grand juries (in those instances, occupancy shall be limited to the lesser of 30 people or ½ the posted room occupancy per Code). The Administrative Judge may grant an exception for a specific courtroom or court proceeding.

C. The number of non-judicial staff reporting to the courthouse shall be reduced in the discretion of the Administrative Judge to the minimum number necessary to ensure safe operation. In-person staffing at these reduced levels should be scheduled in a manner that limits the likelihood and adverse consequence of a positive COVID transmission in the workplace. All staff not reporting to the Courthouse shall work remotely as directed. In all circumstances, non-judicial staff reporting to the Courthouse shall be between 40% to 60% of normal pre-COVID staffing.

D. All current safety measures and protocols will continue. Court managers and PPE Compliance Coordinators shall take steps to assure and enhance monitoring and compliance with all safety measures including masks and social distancing at all time.

E. Each county shall have a space (kiosk or ante-room) available for use by litigants who are unable to appear virtually.

## II. COURT PROCEEDINGS

A. Notwithstanding any other provision herein and except in the case of a criminal jury trial or criminal evidentiary hearing, no incarcerated adult shall be produced to any Court (Supreme, County, Family, City, Town or Village), unless permitted by the Administrative Judge upon a request from the Presiding Judge.

B. **Matters that MAY be heard in-person** (or a hybrid of in-person and virtual) PROVIDED THAT THE PRESIDING JUDGE FIRST FINDS THAT THE MATTER CANNOT PROCEED VIRTUALLY (LEGALLY IMPERMISSIBLE OR LOGISTICALLY IMPRACTICAL).

1. Matters as designated in Exhibit A (attached)
2. Family Court Act Article 10 proceedings
3. Adoptions
4. Civil and Criminal Evidentiary Hearings and Bench Trials
5. Pleas and Sentences

6. Jury Trials may be scheduled to commence beginning March 22nd. The scheduling of the jury trials shall be approved by the Administrative Judge in consultation with the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge. Jury trials shall be conducted in each County pursuant to the individual plan submitted to the Administrative Judge by the S&C Chief Clerk and pursuant to the 5<sup>th</sup> District Jury Plan as previously approved by the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge. Notwithstanding any provision of the aforementioned plans, courtroom occupancy shall be limited to the lesser of 30 people or ½ the posted room occupancy per Code. With regard to criminal jury trials, priority should be given to incarcerated defendants. No jury trial shall be conducted before March 22, 2021.

7. Surrogate's Court Citations

8. Eviction proceedings as authorized by law.

9. Treatment Court and Judicial Diversion appearances where the presiding judge determines that an appearance in an acute case is necessary to protect the health and safety of a defendant. Notwithstanding the provisions of Section (I)(A)(3), subject to the courtroom occupancy limits identified in Section (I)(B) above, there may be a maximum of 10 treatment court or Judicial Diversion cases scheduled every 30 minutes.

10. Any proceeding involving a self-represented litigant(s) where the presiding judge determines that holding the proceeding via Microsoft Teams denies the self-represented litigant(s) meaningful access to the proceeding and where the presiding judge determines that the matter can be heard in-person consistent with all OCA safety protocols.

11. Traffic violation appearances may be heard in-person upon a finding by the presiding judge that it is impractical to conduct the appearance virtually. Notwithstanding the provisions of Section (I)(A)(3), subject to the courtroom occupancy limits identified in Section (I)(B) above, there may be a maximum of 10 traffic violation appearances scheduled every 15 minutes.

**C. ALL OTHER MATTERS MUST BE HEARD VIRTUALLY** using Microsoft Teams video conferencing, or telephone, including but not limited to:

1. Motion arguments
2. Mental Hygiene Law Proceedings pertaining to a hospitalized adult (Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence Marks' Administrative Order AO/72/20)
3. ADR where both parties are represented by counsel and counsel will be present.
4. Arbitrations pursuant to the Part 137 Attorney-Client Fee Dispute Resolution Program
5. Small Claims Assessment Review Proceedings
6. Other routine court matters, not expressly included in Paragraph II(B)

## EXHIBIT A

### A. Criminal matters

1. arraignments
2. bail applications, reviews and writs
3. temporary orders of protection
4. resentencing of retained and incarcerated defendants
5. essential sex offender registration act (SORA) matters

### B. Family Court

1. child protection intake cases involving removal applications
2. juvenile delinquency cases involving remand placement applications, or modification thereof
3. emergency family offense petitions/temporary orders of protection
4. orders to show cause

### C. Supreme Court

1. MHL applications for an assisted outpatient treatment (AOT) plan
2. emergency applications in guardianship matters
3. temporary orders of protection (including but not limited to matters involving domestic violence)
4. emergency applications related to the coronavirus
5. emergency Election Law applications
6. extreme risk protection orders (ERPO)

### D. Civil/Housing matters

1. applications addressing landlord lockouts (including reductions in essential services)
2. applications addressing serious code violations
3. applications addressing serious repair orders
4. applications for post-eviction relief

### E. Surrogate's Court - Any matter involving an individual deceased due to COVID.

**Updated Operating Protocols**  
**Town and Village Courts**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District**  
(Effective February 22, 2021)

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Currently, the metrics again indicate an opportunity to increase in-person proceedings in the courthouses and while the "normal" remains a virtual appearance, certain in-person proceedings identified below are now permitted where access to justice and court operations require an in-person proceeding. The metrics will continue to be monitored. The court system remains nimble and ready to quickly adapt operations as health and safety conditions warrant.

In any District, the Administrative Judge may, based upon local conditions, enact more restrictive operational protocols as deemed appropriate by the Administrative Judge.

These Updated Protocols supersede the Updated Operating Protocols Effective December 9, 2020.

Commencing February 22, 2021, all Town and Village court operations in the 5th Judicial District of the State of New York shall be conducted pursuant to these Updated Protocols.

**I. COURT FACILITY OPERATIONS/SAFETY PROTOCOLS**

- A. Occupancy of all public areas of the court facility is limited to 25% of the posted room occupancy per Code outside of courtrooms. Individuals will not be allowed to congregate in hallways or entry ways while awaiting entry into the courtroom. In addition, occupancy of all courtrooms is limited to the lesser of 20 people OR 20% of the posted room occupancy limit per Code.
- B. Courts are encouraged to use the notification system in the Courtroom Program provided it would allow for a text to be sent to the defendant when the case is called, allowing individuals to safely wait outside court facilities and enter the building only when their case is ready.
- C. There may be only one Judge hearing cases at any given time in a court facility.

- D. While in the court facility (other than in a closed private office), all court personnel and visitors must cover their nose and mouth with a mask or cloth face-covering.
- E. A distance of a minimum of six feet must be kept between all individuals at all times.
- F. Judges are encouraged to more robustly conference criminal matters virtually/telephonically and, if an 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 during the pandemic.
- I. Landlord/Tenant proceedings must comply with existing and future Executive Orders, Administrative Orders and Memos and N.Y. law, including the provisions of the COVID-19 Emergency Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention Act of 2020 (L. 2020, C. 381).

## II. IN-PERSON COURT PROCEEDINGS

- A. Trials: Bench trials and evidentiary hearings may proceed provided that no more than 1 trial or hearing is scheduled per hour. No jury trials may proceed.
- B. With the exception of jury trials and subject to the restrictions of any law, Administrative Order or Executive Order to the contrary, these updated operating protocols do not prohibit any particular case type or proceeding from being heard in-person. However, the following calendaring rules **MUST** be followed:
  - 1. Traffic infractions/violations: No more than 10 cases will be scheduled every 30 minutes.
  - 2. Criminal matters (including all penal law and misdemeanor traffic charges): No more than 10 cases will be scheduled every 45 minutes.
- C. Virtual appearances shall be utilized to the greatest extent possible where a virtual appearance is legally permissible and logistically possible.

**AT ALL TIMES, ALL SAFETY PROTOCOLS LISTED ABOVE SHALL BE FOLLOWED ALONG WITH PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED COVID-19 SAFETY PLANS BY TOWN AND VILLAGE COURTS AND APPROVED BY 5TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE TO THE EXTENT THEY DO NOT CONFLICT WITH THESE PROTOCOLS.**