

ENTERED

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR HOWARD COUNTY

JUL 20 2020

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 2020-04

CLERK, CIRCUIT COURT
HOWARD COUNTY

PHASE III COURTHOUSE ACCESS AND RESTRICTIONS

THIS ORDER SHALL REPLACE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 2020-03

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

WHEREAS, on May 22, 2020, Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera issued an Administrative Order on the Progressive Resumption of Full Function of Judiciary Operations (“Court Re-Opening Plan”) which delineates a five-phase approach to re-opening Maryland Courts, while employing safety measures to continue to support the health and safety of Maryland residents and judiciary personnel; and

WHEREAS, each of the five phases of the Court Re-opening Plan represents an increase in the level of operation within the courthouse. On July 20, 2020, the Circuit Court shall proceed to Phase III, with the Courthouse and the Offices of the Clerks of the Circuit Courts open to the public. However, court and clerk activities shall proceed within building capacity limits and continued restrictions to limit the concentration of individuals and allow social distancing. In Phase III, courts will schedule and hold a broader range of hearings/trials, with limited in-person services to be offered as determined by the administrative judge and posted electronically and in the court facility;

WHEREAS, recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, magistrates and other individuals entering the courthouse buildings, the Circuit Court for Howard County will implement the following procedural and protective measures effective as of July 20, 2020;

NOW THEREFORE, it is ORDERED during Phase III, beginning July 20, 2020, the court house regular business hours remain 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The building and the Clerk’s Office are open to the public. However, entry may be restricted or delayed ensuring courthouse employees, counsel, parties and necessary witnesses appearing for a case scheduled on the court docket, credentialed members of the press, and others approved as appropriate by the Administrative Judge, are permitted entry before capacity levels are reached, and in accordance with Circuit Court administrative policies. The Register of Wills is open to the public by appointment only; and it is further

ORDERED the Court shall continue to accept filings, and shall be available to answer telephone calls, emails, and other communications. Individuals who do not have access to MDEC e-filing may file documents in person or by mail. If a person wishes to file a document and is unsure of the filing method, the individual should contact the Clerk’s office by telephone to get instructions for filing; and it is further

ORDERED All judges and magistrates will comply with the Covid-19 Emergency Orders issued by the Court of Appeals of Maryland, including conducting in-person proceedings according to the guidance issued by the Court of Appeals, Administrative Office of the Courts, and the Governor of

Maryland regarding social distancing, maximum group size, and other restrictions and precautions; and it is further

ORDERED all judges and magistrates will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings permitted in Phase III remotely. Remote criminal proceedings must occur by video participation, both the defendant and counsel must appear on camera for the entire proceeding; and it is further

ORDERED the Howard County Sheriff's Office is authorized to screen all persons permitted to enter the courthouse and to refuse entry for persons in circumstances stated below. **Required Screening Upon Entry** is as follows:

1. All persons entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times, unless excused by the Administrative Judge, or by a presiding judge or magistrate during a court proceeding. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided by the court as supplies allow.
2. All persons entering the building are required to respond to health screening questions to determine if they are feeling feverish; have a cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing; have been asked to self-quarantine by any doctor, hospital, or health agency; have been diagnosed with, or have been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions will be refused admittance to the courthouse.
3. All persons entering the building are subject to a non-contact temperature scan with available equipment. Any person who has an elevated temperature of 100 degrees or greater shall be refused entry into the courthouse.
4. Visitors to the courthouse are encouraged not to bring children under the age of 16 into the courthouse.
5. The Sheriff's Office shall deny entry to any person who refuses to comply with the screening process, or who refuses to wear a face covering.
6. Any person who is refused entry based on health screening, and who is scheduled to appear as counsel, a party, or a witness in a scheduled proceeding, shall provide contact information that will be forwarded to the presiding judicial officer. The presiding judicial officer will determine whether the scheduled matter will be postponed, or whether arrangements can be made for remote participation by the person who was refused entry; and it is further

ORDERED **Courthouse Capacity and Social Distancing Policies** are as follows:


1. Courtrooms and waiting areas in the courthouse will have signage posted to identify the maximum capacity and social distancing recommendations pursuant to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines.
2. No more than one person or members of one household are to be permitted in the public elevator.
3. No more than one person or members of one household are to be permitted in the public bathrooms.

4. Access to secure hallways and chambers is restricted to staff unless otherwise authorized by a judicial officer.
5. These guidelines will be monitored and enforced by the Sheriff's Office and any person who refuses to comply with these requirements is subject to removal from the courthouse; and it is further

ORDERED that **Court Staff Policies** are as follows:

1. Staff experiencing any sign or symptom of illness must stay home from work.
2. Staff must wear face coverings and practice social distancing in a manner consistent with the CDC guidelines. However, courthouse employees who are asymptomatic and not sharing an office space or cubicle with another person, or who can maintain a distance of at least six feet from co-employees or others even though sharing an office, may remove a mask or other nose and mouth covering while in such office.
3. Any employee who tests positive for COVID-19 or has been advised by medical personnel that he or she is presumptively positive, shall self-report immediately to his or her supervisor, self-quarantine and not return to the courthouse until cleared by his or her supervisor.
4. Any employee who has been in contact with a person who tests positive for COVID-19 or has been advised by medical personnel that he or she is presumptively positive, shall self-report immediately to his or her supervisor, self-quarantine and not return to the courthouse until cleared by his or her supervisor; and it is further

ORDERED the above policies and restrictions will remain in effect until further order of this court.



William V. Tucker
County Administrative Judge