



CIRCUIT COURT FOR KENT COUNTY
Safe to Serve
(Plan for the resumption of Jury Trials)

In accordance with the Amended Administrative Order on the Progressive Resumption of Full Function of Judiciary Operations Previously Restricted Due to the COVID-19 Emergency filed in the Court of Appeals of Maryland, the Circuit Court for Kent County will resume full operations, including jury trials, on Monday, October 5, 2020.

The following outlines our plan to take reasonable steps to protect the public and court staff while conducting jury trials, which is an essential component of our system of justice:

Depending on the number of qualified jurors required for each case, jury selection will take place in one or two sessions. The first will begin at 8:30 AM. The second, if needed, will begin at 1:30 PM. Jurors should check the website or call in each day for further instructions.

Upon reporting to the courthouse, jurors will undergo health and security screening. They will then check in with Jury Office staff and will be seated in the courtroom. The courtroom can accommodate up to 42 prospective jurors with appropriate social distancing and designated seating spaces will be marked.

Voir dire (the preliminary examination of prospective jurors to gauge their qualification to serve in a particular case) will begin in the courtroom with a series of general questions and continue in the petit jury room with follow up questions to individuals who responded to the general questions.

Those who are excused for cause or hardship or any other reason will be free to leave the courthouse. The remaining qualified jurors will remain in the courtroom.

After voir dire, either the same day, or the next day if more qualified jurors are required, the jury will be seated and the trial will begin. The jury box area in the courtroom has been enlarged to allow for appropriate social distancing.

During the trial, all health protocols – including: the number of individuals allowed in the courtroom, social distancing and the use of masks – will be enforced by the Court and the security staff.

Witnesses may be provided a designated area to testify and/or clear face shields which will be worn while testifying unless the judge finds good cause otherwise.

Following the conclusion of the trial, jurors will deliberate in the space typically used by the Grand Jury. This larger room will allow the jury to deliberate in a confidential setting with appropriate social distancing. Seats will be placed in marked spaces that are at least six feet apart. The Foreperson will be responsible for maintaining social distancing and the use of masks during deliberations.

Upon reaching a verdict, the jurors will return to the courtroom to deliver their verdict.

Additionally, the following protocols have been implemented throughout the courthouse to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19:

- A limited number of people are permitted in the courthouse;
- Everyone entering the courthouse must:
 - Complete a health questionnaire screening questionnaire;
 - Submit to a temperature check;
 - Sanitize their hands;
- A mask or face covering must be worn at all times (unless permitted by the judge);
- Gloves are available;
- Social distancing must be observed;
- The courthouse is closed and thoroughly cleaned daily from 12:00PM-1:00PM;
- Windows are opened as much as possible for air circulation, weather permitting.

Harris P. Murphy
Administrative Judge
Circuit Court for Kent County