

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF JOHNSON COUNTY, KANSAS

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 22-02

**ORDER REVISING COVID PROTECTION PROTOCOLS
FOR THE 10TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT**

The District Court in Johnson County, Kansas, has operated under several Administrative Orders and transition plans since March 2020 to address the COVID-19 pandemic. All previous Administrative Orders shall remain in place unless modified by this order, transition plans and other related protocols issued previously to continue the operations of this Court during this extended public health crisis. More restrictive procedures and protocols may be re-instated on short notice if conditions change or as this uncertain pandemic may dictate. If a conflict exists between this order and previous orders, this order controls.

On March 2, 2022, the Kansas Supreme Court issued Administrative Order 2022-PR-014 giving district courts greater control to develop minimum standard health protocols as needed to avoid exposing court users, staff, and judicial officers to COVID-19. 2022-PR-014 removes COVID-19 screening requirements while still allowing them based on local conditions, removes the requirement to submit jury plans to the Office of Judicial Administration, and discontinues the Supreme Court Guidance for Developing Minimum Standard Health Protocols and the Supreme Court Guidance for Conducting Jury Proceedings.

Here in the 10th Judicial District, constant monitoring and amendment of health and operations protocols must include directives for determination of the continuing need and usage of physical distancing and masking deemed necessary based on local health conditions. To that end, the Pandemic Response Team has established regular consultation with the county medical director, Dr. Joseph Le Master, together with staff from the Johnson County Health Department, since March 2020 and which continues at this time.

Because of the advice and recommendations from these local public health officials, with consideration for local and national guidance from public health and welfare experts, the Tenth Judicial District issues these orders, **effective on March 7, 2022.**

1. Following the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued on February 25, 2022, all individuals entering the courthouse, including employees of the Judicial Branch, are no longer required to wear masks or other face coverings (**except as otherwise delineated in this Order.**)
2. All individuals, including employees of the Judicial Branch, should maintain adequate physical distance (at least 6 feet) for their own safety and for the health and safety of the general public with whom they come into contact.

“Physical distancing” means keeping a specified distance (6 feet) between yourself and other people who are not members of your household. In setting the specified distance, the court utilizes the distance specified by the person responsible for developing

minimum standard health protocols after consultation with the local medical director and Johnson County Health Department.

A *Visitor Alert* notice shall remain posted at all entrances to the courthouse, courtrooms, and court offices. Self-screening is still an important mitigation measure that will stay in place.

3. In all jury trial proceedings, including juror gathering and jury selection, all persons (**regardless of being fully vaccinated or not fully vaccinated**) will be required to wear a mask in order to maintain the safety and public health considerations for all persons required to gather in the congregate setting necessitated by jury proceedings. Once the jury is selected and seated to hear a case, the presiding judge may authorize a waiver of the requirement to wear a mask or other face covering within the courtroom or other hearing room. The total number of jury trials to be conducted in any given week may be limited, as needed, considering local health conditions and limitations on facilities and court staff. Final determination of the number of jury trials held each week will be decided by the Chief Judge and Court Administrator.
4. The Court will continue to operate under the current plan for conducting jury trials, which can be found on the District Court website at: [Conducting Jury Trials 10th Judicial District.pdf \(jocogov.org\)](#).
5. Judges are to encourage masking and distancing when needed in all other non-jury proceedings and especially when individuals are moving within the courtroom. Absent constitutional concerns, judges should permit individuals to wear masks or other face coverings if they are more comfortable doing so.
6. All judges should continue the use of remote hearings as much as possible to reduce any backlog, and to dispose of new cases efficiently and safely. All courts should continue to schedule hearings with a “video first” process, while granting requests for in-person hearings when a legitimate basis and need, including timeliness, for such hearings in the physical courtroom are clearly identified by a requesting party. Any objections to attending or participating in a court hearing held in the courtroom shall be considered by the presiding judge on an individual basis.
7. The twenty-three divisions of the District Court, together with the three hearing officers, will continue to coordinate hearings and trials in the courthouse to minimize the foot traffic in the hallways, conference rooms and courtrooms. Such precautions have extended to the coordination of jury trial schedules and court hearings to allow for proper space availability on each floor of courtrooms and throughout the public and secure spaces of the courthouse.

8. In-person hearings will continue to be conducted in the assigned judge's courtroom as determined by the presiding judge, with considerations for scheduling amongst other divisions on the same floor to minimize or control the number of persons moving throughout the courthouse.
9. The Clerk of the District Court office is open to the public, including the Self-Help Center. The clerk's office has glass barriers at the customer counters, and the Self-Help Center limits the number of people in the large spaces available so that the general mask requirements (masking optional) will be in effect in those areas.
10. The Law Library is also limited in the number of people who can come into the areas and masking and distancing requirements will be determined by the Law Librarian.
11. Room 1500 (U/A testing) on the 1st floor is open to the public. Individuals required to provide samples will be admitted into the space beyond the public entrance and may be required to wear masks or face coverings while in contact with staff members.
12. Court Services (588 East Santa Fe) will resume in-person services, as determined by the Chief Court Service Officer, on March 7, 2022. All staff and individuals coming into the offices may be required to wear masks or face coverings, as determined by the Chief Court Service Officer. Physical distancing will also be maintained. All group reporting sessions shall be limited to 10 clients per session. Family assessment for domestic cases can resume with home visits with all individuals in the home masking and distancing as determined appropriate by the Chief Court Service Officer.

The Judicial Branch for the Tenth Judicial District appreciates the continued support of all those individuals whom we serve. The past 2 years have been challenging for everyone. We will continue to strive for excellence in serving our community and serving the interests of justice in Johnson County.

Be safe.

BY ORDER OF THE COURT this 4th day of March 2022.


J. CHARLES DROEGE
Chief Judge, Tenth Judicial District

Original:
Clerk of the District Court

Copies:

All Judges

Laura Brewer, Court Administrator

JoCo Courts Listserv

Office of the District Attorney

Office of the Public Defender

Johnson County Sheriff

Office of the County Manager

Johnson County Bar Association