

Administrative Order No. 2020-2

Plan for re-opening of the 19th Judicial District during COVID-19

Kansas Supreme Court Administrative Order 2020-PR-048 sets forth specific guidelines that must be observed in order to safely reopen district court operations to the public. The Order requires that the chief judge of the judicial district consult with the head of the local public health department to determine how to phase in return to in-person hearings and public access to the court system taking into account local risk and the courtroom facilities. The court may open only after the chief judge has fully complied with directives of the county health officer and has developed a plan for appropriate screening of individuals entering the courtroom or court office and established a plan for sanitization of work or courtroom surfaces between contacts with more than one individual. Additionally, the court must possess sufficient cleaning products or other supplies necessary to sustain the cleaning requirements. The court must also possess sufficient PPE for district staff and court participants as may be needed. Last, even when open no hearing or docket may be conducted if it requires more than 10 people in a courtroom and each of those 10 people must be able to remain at least 6 feet apart throughout.

The chief judge of the 19th Judicial District and has now consulted with the local health officer and sets forth the following guidelines for re-opening courtrooms and court facilities to the public:

- 1) A screening station will be established on the first floor of the Cowley County Courthouse and on the third floor of the City of Arkansas City Building. The Cowley County Sheriff shall designate a courtroom security deputy to be present at said station from 7:45 a.m. until noon and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. during each day that the court is open for business.
- 2) All court employees, including judges shall be subject to screening when they enter the work facility. All attorneys, litigants, witnesses or others who wish to enter the court facilities shall be subject to screening.
- 3) Screening shall consist of taking the temporal temperature of each person with an infrared thermometer. If the person displays a temporal temperature of 99 degrees Fahrenheit or greater then they shall be denied access to the court facilities. Each person shall be asked questions consistent with the visitor alert prepared by the Kansas Judicial Branch. (see attachment) In the event a person answers yes to any of these questions they will be denied access to the court facilities. Any individual who refuses to comply with this process shall also be denied entrance to the court facility.
- 4) The screening officer shall record the date, name and contact information for each visitor that seeks admittance.
- 5) In the event the visitor has physical contact with any surface, said surface shall be cleaned in between visitors.
- 6) Visitors seeking business at the court clerk office shall be admitted one person at a time consistent with social distancing guidelines. Visitors who have children or other family with them will be admitted as one unit, however visitors are encouraged to not bring individuals who are not needed for the court visit or process. Those individuals who are waiting to be

admitted will be directed to step outside or return to their vehicle and will be contacted by phone or text indicating that they are cleared to be admitted.

- 7) In advance of hearings or dockets, the attorneys or court staff shall supply to the screening officer the names of witnesses or litigants who are expected to appear in court.
- 8) All counter surfaces, counsel tables, podiums or other surfaces where a visitor has physical contact must be cleaned and sanitized before the next visitor shall have access to the same area.
- 9) All employees are encouraged to wear PPE that covers their nose and mouth while they are at work. Employees that have direct contact with the public that is not otherwise protected by shield or barrier or who are engaged in cleaning of hard surfaces shall use PPE while engaged in this process.
- 10) Employees, judges, attorneys, litigants, witnesses or other visitors shall maintain the recommended 6 feet social distancing barrier between themselves and other individuals that are not part of their family unit. All courtrooms and court facilities shall have markings and signs necessary to designate the required social distance. Until otherwise modified by an administrative order of the Kansas Supreme Court, there shall be no more than 10 people at the same time in any courtroom.
- 11) To the extent possible all court proceedings shall continue to be conducted by the use of audio/visual technology such as the Zoom platform.
- 12) Court Services Officers shall use audio/visual technology to conduct client visits, LSIR/YLS, SASSI testing and court ordered mediation. Court Services Officers shall not have contact with the public unless and until sufficient plastic shielding is acquired and then such contact should only be done on an as needed basis. The Chief Court Services Officer shall develop a specific protocol for the use of saliva testing kits for the purposes of testing individuals on probation or bond supervision for the use and presence of controlled substances in their system.
- 13) No jury trials shall be scheduled and no potential jurors shall be summoned until such time as a specific procedure and protocol has been established, along with sufficient PPE or other devices, as are needed to insure the safety of jurors and other trial participants.
- 14) All non- confidential hearings shall continue to be broadcast on YouTube Live until such time as court proceedings are fully open to the public and public attendance is not substantially limited by social distancing or other requirements.
- 15) Each Judge shall have the authority to direct that participants wear a facial covering or mask during court proceedings. If this is required, then the court shall make this PPE available to any participant that does not already have PPE of their own. Judges should consider both the length of exposure, the ability to consistently adhere to spacing requirements, the community circumstances and the specific risks of the participants in determining if facial PPE will be required.

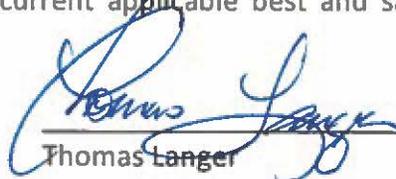
This order shall become effective on May 28, 2020 and shall continue in place until such time as it is modified by additional administrative orders issued by the Chief Judge of the Judicial District.

BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF JUDGE OF THE 19TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF KANSAS this 14th day of May, 2020.



Nicholas M. St. Peter, Chief Judge

I, Thomas Langer, Director of the Cowley County Health Department, have reviewed this order and find it consistent with my directives and current applicable best and safe practices for opening the court to the public.



Thomas Langer
Director, Cowley County Health Department