



# Responsible RestartOhio

## COURT ACCESS

Consistent with Governor Mike DeWine’s Responsible RestartOhio plan, the following principles are meant to guide the operations of the Ohio judicial system and protect the health of court employees and the public while also supporting community efforts to control the spread of COVID-19. As always, judges should follow all Ohio Department of Health directives, including the [\*Director’s Stay Safe Ohio Order\*](#), dated April 30, 2020, and consult with local health departments for specific guidance, as necessary.

### GENERAL GUIDANCE

- Courts must establish policies that do the following:
  - Provide for daily health assessments of employees to determine “fitness for duty.”
  - Require face coverings for employees and the public.
  - Provide all employees and the public with the means to comply with social distancing requirements (6 feet between people) and address how social distancing will be maintained in areas such as courtrooms, meeting rooms, elevators, restrooms, common areas, etc.
  - Provide for operational protocols if an individual tests positive for COVID-19.
- Obtain additional cleaning and sanitizing materials.
- Establish a robust process for cleaning and sanitizing throughout the day and at the close of business, particularly in common areas.
- Limit gatherings in cafeterias and break rooms.
- Develop signage to communicate expectations to employees and the public.

### STAFFING

- Continue to telework to the extent possible.
- When possible, utilize other areas (such as the courtroom, jury room, break room, etc.) as work stations for staff to ensure appropriate distancing and minimize contact.
- If needed, schedule staff to work alternative hours to assist with appropriate distancing and minimize contact.
- If possible, divide essential staff into groups and establish rotating in-office days or shifts.
- Reduce sharing of work materials.

### CONTACT WITH THE PUBLIC

- Continue to hold hearings remotely via technology whenever possible, including arraignments, pre-trials, status conferences, mediations, probation, specialized dockets appointments, etc.
- Update the court’s website to encourage self-service: include access to forms, as well as local bar association contact information and legal aid contact information.
- Use time-certain, appointment scheduling, rather than group or block scheduling, to maintain appropriate distancing and minimize contact.

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## CONTACT WITH THE PUBLIC - *cont.*

- Block seating in public areas and in the courtroom to maintain appropriate distancing and minimize contact.
- Mark an “X” with tape 6 feet from the clerk’s window and/or desks in public areas to maintain appropriate distancing and minimize contact, including in probation and specialized dockets areas.
- Consider installing plexiglass at counters to minimize contact between staff and the public.
- Email or fax scanned documents to parties for signature; accept return of scanned documents by email or fax.
- Establish payment via credit card and procure point-of-sale equipment to minimize contact between staff and the public.
- Develop a plan to maintain appropriate distancing and minimize contact for jurors:
  - Assemble jurors in a courtroom or other large room to allow for spacing
  - Summon the smallest number of jurors possible
  - Conduct voir dire in small groups
  - Establish a liberal policy to excuse jurors with health concerns.

## JUSTICE SYSTEM PARTNERS

- Hold virtual meetings with the bar, jail, law enforcement, child welfare, adult protective services, and other justice partners to communicate the court’s operational expectations.
- Send notification to the local media and bar association communicating the court’s operational expectations.
- Post a notice on the court’s website communicating the court’s operational expectations.