

Monroe County Clerk of Courts

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PRESS RELEASE

Effective Monday, August 10, 2020, Monroe County Circuit Courts will resume in-person proceedings in a limited capacity.

The county's three circuit judges formed a multidisciplinary stakeholders committee to create a safety plan for re-opening the courts. The intention of the plan is to be proactive, recognizing the need to provide constitutional and statutory protections to all parties while preserving the public's right to access.

Under the plan, face masks must be worn in the justice center by all participants, including the judges and staff. Plexiglass barriers will be installed around the witness stand in the courtrooms. Extra cleanings will take place as needed.

In person hearings will return in three phases. Jury trials, suspended nearly five months ago by order of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, will resume beginning August 26, 2020.

Judges will continue to schedule and conduct some court calendars remotely. They will exercise discretion in holding other hearings in person based on constitutional and statutory considerations. Under the final phase of the safety plan, all hearings may be held in person.

Attorneys and citizens accessing the courts must pay close attention to Court Notices for detailed instructions on how to appear in court when a case is to be heard remotely.

Highlights of the plan include:

- Individuals entering the Justice Center will be subject to screening per CDC health screening guidelines. Anyone refusing to comply or exhibiting any symptom outlined in the screening will be required to immediately exit the building.

- Judges will use their best efforts to schedule and conduct Court proceedings remotely as may be possible via video conferencing or telephone.
- Everyone in the courtroom will be required to wear face masks, practice social distancing and practice appropriate hygiene requirements while in the courthouse.
- Individuals coming to court are strongly encouraged to bring their own face masks. Individuals reporting for court without face masks will be provided one by the Court while supplies last.
- Signage will be posted in strategic locations outlining requirements.
- Plexiglass barriers will be installed around the witness stand to allow for testimony.

The committee will meet regularly as it monitors the ongoing health situation. It will make any necessary adjustments to the plan or phases as dictated by the public health crisis. For further information, please contact the Monroe County Clerk of Courts office at 608-269-8745.