

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS, GENERAL DIVISION
MUNICIPAL COURT
HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO

IN RE: COURTHOUSE OPERATIONS AND : M210001
ACCESS UNDER EXIGENT :
CIRCUMSTANCES CREATED BY : JOINT AMENDED
COVID-19 : ADMINISTRATIVE
 : ORDER

In response to the public health crisis created by COVID-19 and the actions taken by federal, state, and local officials, the Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas, General Division and the Hamilton County Municipal Court (the "Courts") have implemented a number of safety measures through a series of Administrative Orders¹ in an effort to maintain Court functions while complying with public health orders and guidelines.

On July 27, 2021, the CDC updated its guidance for fully vaccinated people, recommending that everyone wear a mask in indoor public settings in areas of "substantial" and "high" transmission, regardless of vaccination status. According to CDC data, Hamilton County reached a level of "high transmission" during the week of August 2, 2021 to August 8, 2021. County level data for community transmission rates is available on the CDC's website: <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>.

In accordance with the most updated guidance from the CDC and to further serve the community, effective immediately and until further order, the Courts modify their previous COVID-19 related Administrative Orders as follows:

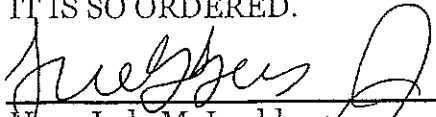
1. This Joint Amended Administrative Order applies to all Court Facilities. For purposes of this order, "Court Facilities" includes the Hamilton County Courthouse at 1000 Main Street (Courthouse), and to Common Pleas, General Division and Municipal Court employees who work in the Hamilton County Justice Center at 1000 Sycamore Street (Justice Center). With regard to any Municipal Court employees or employees of the General Division of Common Pleas who work at 800 Broadway, or any person doing business with such employees, while in that building, those individuals shall follow the directives of the Domestic Relations and Juvenile Court Divisions.

¹ See March 13, 2020, Joint Administrative Order in re Courthouse Operations Under Exigent Circumstances Created by Covid-19, No. M200001; March 24, 2020, Joint Administrative Order in re Courthouse Access Under Exigent Circumstances Created by COVID-19, No M20001; April 6, 2020, Amended Administrative Order re Courthouse Access under Exigent Circumstances Created by COVID-19, M200002; and, April 6, 2020 Joint Administrative Order in re Courthouse Access Screening Under Exigent Circumstances Created by COVID-19.

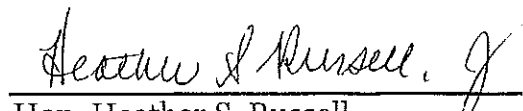
2. Consistent with public health guidelines, anyone entering Court Facilities under this Joint Amended Administrative Order shall wear a facial covering/mask in all common areas and in courtrooms at the discretion of the judge presiding therein.
 - a. For purposes of this Order, a facial covering is a face covering or mask made of cloth or a similar material that covers the nose, mouth, and chin at all times, and is separate and apart from one's clothing, and does not obscure the identity of the person.
 - b. Individuals who wish to wear a face covering for personal health reasons shall be permitted to do so even where masks are not required in a particular courtroom. Individuals may be asked by a judge to remove their face covering if necessary for hearing purposes.
3. Individuals shall observe physical distancing where possible, keeping a minimum of six (6) feet of distance between people at all times in all areas.
4. Each Common Pleas and Municipal Court judge retains the authority to establish their own standards within their courtroom and adjoining offices including capacity, social distancing, and mask policies.
 - a. To the extent a Judge requires the use of a face covering in their courtroom, a face covering or mask shall be provided by the Court.
 - b. COVID Jury Trial rooms, outfitted to comply with previous health guidelines, will continue to be available to Judges who wish to conduct jury trials in a more protected setting.
5. To limit large gatherings, judges are encouraged to continue to stagger dockets and utilize remote hearing capabilities where possible.
6. Given the continued threat posed by COVID-19 to unvaccinated and immunocompromised individuals, Judges are strongly encouraged to utilize remote hearing capabilities or liberally grant continuances to accommodate those with ongoing COVID-19 related personal health concerns.
7. Electronic filing through the Clerk of Courts e-filing portal is encouraged for all filings where possible.
8. The availability of hand sanitizers and regular cleaning in common areas shall be maintained.

9. No person shall enter Court Facilities, including all Hamilton County elected officials, county and Court employees, contractors, and anyone seeking to participate in or attend a Court proceeding if:
 - a. Without regard to vaccination status:
 - i. They have COVID-19 or believe they have COVID-19, or;
 - ii. They exhibit signs of respiratory infection (cough, fever, shortness of breath). Such individuals seeking to attend a court hearing shall be instructed to call their attorney or the courtroom staff of the judge presiding over the proceedings.
 - b. They are an unvaccinated person, and:
 - i. Within the last 14 days, have been exposed to someone suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, or;
 - ii. They are awaiting a COVID-19 test result.
 - c. The Hamilton County Sheriff and his or her Deputies and other agents shall not be liable for anyone admitted or denied access to Court Facilities regardless of such person's medical health.
10. Unvaccinated employees must perform a daily symptom assessment before coming to work.
11. This Joint Amended Administrative Order is effective immediately and until the Hamilton County level of community transmission is no longer "high" as measured by the CDC COVID-19 Data Tracker for counties or until further order of the Courts. To the extent this Order conflicts with any of the Courts' previous COVID-19 related Administrative Orders, this Amended Joint Administrative Order supersedes.

IT IS SO ORDERED.



Hon. Jody M. Luebbers
Presiding Judge, Court of Common Pleas
Administrative Judge, General Division



Hon. Heather S. Russell
Presiding and Administrative Judge
Municipal Court