

Amending COVID-19 Circuit Court Operating Plan

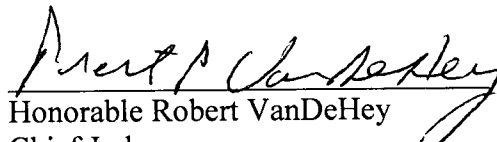
WHEREAS: On May 21, 2021, the Wisconsin Supreme Court terminated the following orders: (1) In re the Matter of Jury Trials During the COVID-19 Pandemic—Amended (S. Ct. Order issued March 22, 2020; Amended April 15, 2020); (2) In re the Matter of Filing of Court Documents in Circuit and Appellate Courts (Temporary Mailbox Rule) (S. Ct. Order issued April 13, 2020); (3) Interim Rule 20-02; and In re the Matter of the Extension of Orders and the Interim Rule Concerning Continuation of Jury Trials, Suspension of Statutory Deadlines for Non-Criminal Jury Trials, and Remote Hearings During the COVID-19 Pandemic (Amended Order) (S. Ct. Order issued October 1, 2020).

WHEREAS: The Wisconsin Supreme Court “no longer requires that personal masking, social distancing, and sanitizing court facilities be part of any plan for circuit court and municipal court proceedings approved by the chief judge of the applicable judicial district. Instead, circuit courts and municipal courts, with the approval of the applicable chief judge, shall make county-wide decisions about what is in the best interest of circuit court and municipal court operations, respectively. This includes deciding whether or not to continue to require masking, social distancing, and sanitizing court facilities on a county by county basis.”

WHEREAS: The Circuit Court Judge has determined that it is in the best interest of the circuit court operations for Buffalo County to amend its existing COVID-19 Court Operational Plan, dated August 5, 2020.

THEREFORE: The COVID-19 Court Operational Plan for Buffalo County is hereby amended.

Date: June 3, 2021


Honorable Robert VanDeHey
Chief Judge
Seventh Judicial Administrative District

COVID-19 Circuit Court Operating Plan for Buffalo County

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the buildings housing the courts, the courts of Buffalo County will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. The county judiciary has established a stakeholder committee to discuss and consider the recommendations outlined in the Wisconsin COVID- 19 Task Force report.
2. All judges will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. Before calendaring in-person hearings, the stakeholder committee has addressed staffing needs and will endeavor to procure any equipment and supplies deemed necessary.
4. The stakeholder subcommittee will continue to meet regularly, maintain communication with the local health authority and administrator coordinator who serves as the county risk manager, and will adjust this operating plan as necessary with any changes in the public health conditions in the county.
5. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than September 8, 2020. Subject to the discretion of the court official assigned to an individual case, in person hearings may be held prior to September 8, 2020 where the court official determines an in-person hearing is necessary. The assigned court official will consult with the parties involved for input on the necessity of in court proceedings.

Scheduling

1. Court intake will return to in person proceedings, upon request.
2. The Public defender will be allowed the use of the small court room on intake day to be used as a conference room. Other conference rooms will be available to other attorneys on intake day on a first come first served basis. All attorneys will be expected to wipe the tables and chairs in the room they use with disinfectant wipes in between client meetings.

Social Distancing

1. Upon request of a party, litigant, witness or juror, accommodations will be made to socially distance the requesting party.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers will be placed at the entrance of the main courtroom, building entrance, and elevator entrance.

2. Disinfectant wipes or spray will be placed at counsel tables, at the witness stand, on the judges' benches, at the clerk's desk, and the court reporters desk.

3. Post CDC flyers outlining appropriate hygiene, or public safety have been posted in multiple locations inside and outside the courtrooms. Notices regarding the availability of hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes/spray in court related areas of the courthouse will be posted at the entrance of each courtroom.

Face Coverings

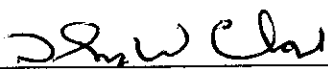
1. Face coverings will not be required inside or near the courtroom area. Face coverings are encouraged for non-vaccinated individuals.

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building.
2. During court sessions, disinfectant wipes or spray will be made available to participants to use to clean court room tables, chairs, benches, microphones and equipment used in the court session.

I have conferred with all judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the stakeholder committee. A list of members on the committee and the frequency in which they will continue to meet is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building covered by this Operating Plan will conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 06-02-21



Hon. Thomas W. Clark
Buffalo County Circuit Court

Date: _____

Hon. Robert P. VanDeHey
Chief Judge Approval

Buffalo County COVID-19 Stakeholder Committee Members

Thomas W. Clark, Circuit Court Judge
Mark Franklin, Court Commissioner
Allan Morgan, Court Commissioner
Gary Schlosstein, Court Commissioner
Patrick Brummond, District Court Administrator
April Loeffler, Buffalo County Public Health Nurse
Sonya Hansen, Buffalo County Administrator
Thomas Bilski, Buffalo County District Attorney/Corporation Counsel
Ashley Henthorn, Court Reporter
Renee Pronschinske, Register in Probate, Juvenile Clerk & Judicial Assistant
Roselle Schlosser, Clerk of Court
Bruce Fuerbringer, Buffalo County Emergency Management
Michael Schmidtknecht, Buffalo County Sheriff
Mike Felton, DOC Supervisor
Randy Kees, Public Defender
Joe Randtke, Attorney
Marv Rieck, Building and Grounds Supervisor