

PHASE I COVID-19 ORDERS FOR THE 19TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Due to an employee testing positive for COVID-19, the courthouse is returning to Phase 1. The Cole County Courthouse is a building nearly 100 years old and has limited space in the hallways, the courtrooms and the offices. In order to provide a safe environment during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Cole County Circuit Court has worked to ensure that a distance of 6 feet will be observed at all times in the hallways, courtrooms and offices. In order to achieve safe distancing and safety for all occupants, the Court will be imposing limits on occupancy and other restrictions to the processing and trials of cases. Pursuant to the operation directives of the Missouri Supreme Court dated May 4, 2020, Phase I order is as follows:

1. IF YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19, WITHIN THE LAST 48 HOURS STAY HOME AND REQUEST A CONTINUANCE. Forms for continuance are available on the Courts website.
2. Health screenings will take place during the pandemic. All visitors and employees will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and their temperature will be checked. All visitors will be required to wear a mask except when actually testifying. Visitors should bring their own.
3. There will be limits on the number of visitors in the courthouse at any one time. The Court will schedule hearings at staggered times to meet the needs of social distancing. Ten persons will be the limit to any space at one time which includes court personnel. Each courtroom, hallway and office have been measured and marked to provide for 6 feet of distancing between persons.
4. If you have a lawyer, contact them for instructions before coming to the Courthouse. If you don't have a lawyer, you may address questions or submit papers to col.prp@courts.mo.gov. Your questions will be routed to the proper party. Please include your case number and contact information, including your phone number so we can get back to you.
5. Many cases can be heard with only one appearance at the courthouse. All persons not represented by counsel are strongly encouraged to limit their appearance in the courthouse to the actual trial or appearances as ordered by the Court. Online tracking of cases is available on Casenet (www.courts.mo.gov/casenet). Forms, such as petitions for orders of protection, continuances, are available on line (www.colecounty.org/348/Court-Forms) or (www.courts.mo.gov and select Court Forms) and at the entry to the courthouse. If you need to make a payment, you should do so by mail to Cole County Circuit Court, P.O. Box 1870, Jefferson City, MO 65102. Please include your name and case number with your check. Money orders/cashier's check and approved checks only, NO CASH, online via Missouri Casenet and over the phone credit or debit cards.
6. BE ON TIME for your court appearance. Do not come more than 10 minutes early as waiting space with safe distancing is limited.
7. If you come for a Court appearance, COME ALONE. Friends and family members will not be admitted unless specific permission is obtained 48 hours in advance from the Court Administrator at julie.cole@courts.mo.gov to ensure their attendance will not exceed the occupancy limits. All witnesses will remain outside of the courthouse until their testimony is required and will then leave the courthouse following their testimony.
8. The Court will continue to utilize all available technologies including teleconferencing and video conferencing whenever possible to limit in person courtroom appearances to the extent not prohibited by constitutional or statutory provisions.

9. Any requests for press access should be made to the 19th Circuit Media Coordinator pursuant to Supreme Court Operating Rule 16 and local court rules. A print representative and a broadcast representative will be selected. Please contact Jeff Haldiman at JHaldiman@newstribune.com.
10. Petit Juries are postponed until completion of Phase I. Grand Juries will be held offsite, as it has been for this term.
11. Criminal dockets will be conducted to ensure due process and safety of the courtroom occupants by maintaining social distancing in the courtroom. As such, the dockets will be staggered in time. Written waivers of arraignments and entrance of pleas of not guilty by counsel will be accepted. Attorneys may appear by video. Entrance of pleas of guilty should be scheduled so that all orders will be completed in advance to minimize the time spent in the courthouse. Defendants who are unrepresented will be required to appear in person. Jail dockets will continue.
12. Civil dockets will continue to be conducted by telephone conference if both parties are represented by attorneys. Status updates and requests for trial settings with exclusions may be made in writing 2 days in advance. Any uncontested cases and default hearings may be submitted by written affidavit or by audio or video conference. The Court will explore the use of video or other media for all other non-jury civil cases. The Court will arrange conference calls on the civil dockets if only two attorneys are involved and the matter lasts less than five minutes. For such cases, attorneys should be available during the entire docket. Otherwise, a separate time for conference calls may be arranged with each division.
13. In order to accommodate the occupancy limits, priority will be given to the following cases:
 - A. Felony cases,
 - B. Juvenile cases,
 - C. Orders of protection including child orders of protection,
 - D. Contested custody cases involving abuse or neglect,
 - E. Assault, resisting arrest and driving while intoxicated misdemeanors,
 - F. Applications for mental health commitment,
 - G. Emergency probate matters,
 - H. Proceeding related to COVID-19 public health.
14. This order will take effect on August 26, 2020. Phase I will last at least 14 calendar days.

So ordered this 26th day of August, 2020.



Patricia S. Joyce, Presiding Judge
19th Judicial Circuit