

STATE OF VERMONT
OFFICE OF THE COURT ADMINISTRATOR

Administrative Directive No. PG-13



State Court Administrator

**HEALTH SCREENING AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS FOR ALL VERMONT COURTHOUSES
AND JUDICIARY FACILITIES DURING THE JUDICIAL EMERGENCY**

A. AUTHORITY

Following the Governor’s general declaration of a statewide emergency resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Vermont Supreme Court issued Administrative Order 49 containing a Declaration of Judicial Emergency—since amended on several occasions—for the purpose of protecting the health of all judicial personnel and courthouse visitors and mitigating the spread of the virus.

In its Explanatory Note to the Declaration of Judicial Emergency, the Supreme Court observed that moving forward “the evolving public health crisis” would necessitate “adjusting court rules and operations” as public health and safety—informed by Department of Health and CDC guidelines—required. The Court explained that many of these “operational changes . . . fall within the existing authority of the Court Administrator.”

Pursuant to this authority, it is directed that during the phased expansion of court operations and until further amendment of this Directive, the following operational Health Screening and Safety Protocols shall be observed in all Vermont courthouses and Judiciary facilities. These protocols are informed by current public health guidelines and, therefore, may be periodically updated as guidelines change. Physical signs posted in courthouses advising visitors and court staff of health and safety protocols may be updated from time to time, as well.

B. Health and Safety Protocols for Visitors to Courthouses

1. Rules for Entry and Continued Presence

The following rules shall apply to all visitors seeking to enter and conduct business in a courthouse or Judiciary facility. These rules shall be prominently displayed on notices at all courthouse entrances:

- Any person who has been in close contact with another person who has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus within the last 14 days or who is currently experiencing symptoms of respiratory illness identified by current health guidelines will not be permitted to enter.
- Masks must be worn by all courthouse visitors at all times within the courthouse, and social distancing of at least six feet must be maintained to the extent possible. Masks may be made of cloth and shall cover the individual's mouth and nose at all times. Exceptions to the mask requirement will be made for children under the age of two and others who present written evidence that warrants, on medical grounds, a deviation from this policy.
- Prior to entry, all courthouse visitors must respond to health screening questions to verify that they are not experiencing specified symptoms of respiratory illness.
- Visitors to non-judicial governmental agencies within a courthouse facility will be expected to comply with health and safety entry protocols mutually agreed to by the Court Administrator's Office and those agencies.
- In the event a court security officer believes there is the possibility of exposure to the Coronavirus due to the presence of a visitor, the court security officer will contact a Court Operations Manager immediately.

2. Denial of Entry

Persons who are experiencing one or more of the specified symptoms of respiratory illness or who fail to comply with mask and social distancing requirements will not be allowed to enter or, after entry, will be required to leave. Any person who has a scheduled court hearing or is otherwise required to appear at a courthouse and cannot enter a courthouse or Judiciary facility as a result of screening protocols, or is required to leave for failure to observe rules relating to wearing mask or observe social distancing, should proceed as follows:

- If the person is represented by an attorney, the person should contact that attorney.
- If the person is an attorney or is self-represented, the person will be directed to call the clerk's office so that a Judiciary representative can notify the judge, who will decide how to proceed in connection with the hearing. The judge will determine whether to reschedule or have the person participate by telephone or video or pursue another course of action.
- If the person is seeking protection from abuse or protection from harassment, the person should obtain the appropriate petition and affidavit for Relief from Abuse or Stalking and Sexual Assault, contact a domestic violence advocacy agency, if they so choose, and follow the process to file the petition by email if able, or drop the paperwork off in the receptacles at the entrance to the courts.

C. Health and Safety Protocols for Judiciary Staff

1. Judiciary staff shall be subject to the same requirements for entry as courthouse visitors set forth in Section B above, subject to the following additional protocols:
 - Judiciary staff who experience symptoms of respiratory illness shall contact their supervisors and shall not report to work or, if at work, shall contact their supervisor and leave the courthouse immediately. Judicial officers shall notify the Chief Superior Judge or State Court Administrator and leave the courthouse immediately. Such individuals shall not return to a courthouse or other judiciary facility until (i) seven days from the date symptoms began or (ii) until the person is free of fever, signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 72 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines, whichever is later.
 - Judiciary staff shall wear masks at all times and shall maintain six feet of distance to the greatest extent possible when they are interacting with the public, when they are in public areas, and when they are in work areas including conference rooms, break rooms, and other common work areas.
 - Masks need not be worn by Judiciary staff in private offices unless interacting with other staff while there.

D. Cleaning, Sanitizing and Hygiene Protocols

1. Screening Stations

- After each use of any screening tub/container used during the screening process, the container shall be sanitized by a court security officer utilizing a common EPA-registered household disinfectant provided by the Judiciary. If supplies are not available from the Judiciary, court operations managers are authorized to purchase appropriate cleaning materials and submit expenses for reimbursement.
- Equipment that is utilized for the purpose of the screening, such as a hand-wand, shall be wiped down by a court security officer at least once per hour.
- Any other item used during screening which security staff believe has been in contact with a visitor or which a court security officer believes could have been in contact with a visitor shall also be sanitized by a court security officer.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer will be provided for visitors and staff at all courthouse entrances.

2. Courthouse Cleaning and Sanitizing

- Courthouses and other Judiciary facilities will be cleaned and disinfected by the owners of the buildings in accordance with current CDC and other applicable public health guidance.
- The Department of Buildings and General Services (BGS) provides cleaning services in State-owned courthouse buildings. BGS interprets current public-health guidance to require cleaning and disinfecting of all common areas and bathrooms at least once daily, and the cleaning of frequently touched surfaces as often as practical, but no less than twice daily. Frequency and intensity of cleaning may vary depending upon use of the area within the particular facility.
- Common areas or objects that BGS will clean and disinfect include handrails, doorknobs, light switches, reader code pads, backroom areas, refrigerators, levers for hand soap sanitizers, and bathrooms.
- BGS will also clean all window, plexiglass, speaker grilles and counters on the customer service side of customer service counters.
- Court staff should regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched objects within their workstations, such as keyboards, telephones, handrails, doorknobs, light switches, reader code pads, breakroom areas, and refrigerators. Judiciary staff should use the supplies provided by BGS or the Judiciary for cleaning and disinfecting these areas. If supplies are not available from the Judiciary, court operations managers are authorized to purchase appropriate cleaning materials and submit expenses for reimbursement.
- The clerk's side of a customer service counter, including the window, plexiglass, speaker grille, and customer service counter services should be frequently cleaned and disinfected by court staff wearing gloves.
- Court staff should avoid using another person's phone, desk, office, or other work tools and equipment whenever it is possible to do so.
- While arrangements for the cleaning of County buildings will vary across counties, the same standards as those enumerated above relating to state buildings must be observed in the cleaning of common areas, including bathrooms and all window, plexiglass, speaker grilles, and counter on the customer side of service counters,

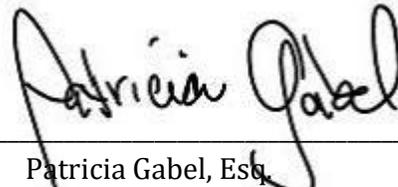
3. Employee and Visitor Hygiene

- Judiciary staff must have easy and frequent access to hand cleaning facilities or hand sanitizer during the duration of their work. Visitors will be encouraged through the use of posted notices to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer regularly and frequently while in a courthouse.

- Hand sanitizers and disinfectant wipes, or disinfectant spray and towels, will be placed at counsel tables in each courtroom. Court operations managers will place signs on each table asking those sitting there to clean their places before and after their use of the table. Judiciary staff will restock these items when needed. If supplies are not available from the Judiciary, court operations managers are authorized to purchase appropriate cleaning materials and submit expenses for reimbursement.
- When they arrive, plastic barriers and separators will be installed in those areas of courthouses and other Judiciary facilities where such installations are reasonably believed to inhibit the aerosolized spread of Coronavirus. The design and placement of plastic barriers separating Judiciary staff from the public and staff from one another will differ from courthouse to courthouse, as will the timing of the installation.

This directive is effective immediately.

Dated this 19th day of June, 2020

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia Gabel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P".

Patricia Gabel, Esq.
State Court Administrator