

Alissa Hudson

From: pwcbbar@mail-list.com on behalf of Tracey Lenox <tracey.lenox@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 10, 2020 10:13 AM
To: pwcbbar@mail-list.com
Subject: [pwcbbar] New COVID-19 precautions at the courthouse

Hello all--

After a meeting on Friday, the following policy to mitigate COVID-19 risk in the courthouse will be in effect beginning today.

Sheriff's deputies will continue to conduct screening for every person entering the courthouse, to include a set of VSC recommended COVID-related questions and a no-touch temperature check. Deputies have discretion to not ask questions of personnel re-entering the courthouse after a previous entry the same day.

Sheriff's deputies will remind people entering the courthouse that mask usage is mandatory when entering the building, and they will offer masks and gloves to anyone entering who does not have a mask or gloves and who wants those PPE.

Sheriff's deputies, beginning immediately, will attempt to estimate the crowd size in the hallways outside the courtrooms on each level of the courthouse. When they determine that six feet of social distance is not feasible given the number of people present in the hallways, they will communicate that to the front door deputies.

When crowd sizes in the hallways have grown too large for safe social distancing, the front door deputies will advise those seeking to enter the courthouse for a court appearance on the unsafe level of court, whether that be J&DR, GDC or CC, that current conditions prevent entry, and that they will be allowed entry as soon as crowd sizes reach safe levels. The deputies will also advise those seeking entry that judges are aware of this policy and will refrain from issuing capiases until the conclusion of all dockets and the admittance of all persons having business before their court.

Attorneys should be aware that, although this new restricted-admittance policy does not apply to them, it does apply to their clients. If an attorney is ready to proceed with a case but the client has been prevented from entering the building due to crowd-size control in the hallways, the client will not be allowed to re-enter until the numbers of persons in the hallways allow for appropriate social distancing and deputies can allow additional people to enter.

This policy of restricting entrance will currently apply only to persons seeking entry to attend a court appearance, not persons with other business with the courts that do not entail a court appearance.

Sheriff's deputies will advise those entering the court that only litigants, witnesses and their attorneys should enter the courthouse, and all others may be asked to leave in order to control crowd sizes in the courthouse.

In the hallways of the courthouse, sheriff's deputies will encourage all people to wear masks and to keep six feet of distance, including the public, law enforcement officers and attorneys. Attorneys and other members of the public are cautioned to remember that there are health exceptions to the requirement of masking, and they should not jump to conclusions if they observe someone *not *wearing a mask in the courthouse.

Whenever possible, the Court will make available smaller meeting rooms for attorneys to meet with clients privately while enabling social distancing.

However, given space limitations, that may be impossible in many areas.

Given space limitations, the Court and the Sheriff's Office strongly encourage attorneys to remind clients to refrain from inviting family members and other non-witnesses to attend court. They ask that whenever possible, attorneys meet with clients prior to entering the courthouse or to conduct client conferences outside the courthouse, away from other people for confidentiality reasons, but in the open air for health and safety reasons.

Finally, the Sheriff strongly recommends that members of the Bar *not* approach others in the hallways of the courthouse to attempt to enforce masking and distancing requirements. Instead, he asks that attorneys bring concerns about masking or distancing issues to the attention of a deputy who, where appropriate, will address the issue and raise concerns about non-compliance with Judges within the courtrooms. Given the Sheriff's primary responsibility for securing the safety of all those using the courthouse, the Sheriff prefers that the Bar avoid any unnecessary confrontations in the hallways and that they allow deputies to remain responsible for identifying and de-escalating any conflicts, as opposed to members of the Bar or public."

All courthouse personnel fervently hope that the local Bar will remain patient with sheriff's deputies and others who try to implement these measures to provide a safe environment for the public and for those who must access the courthouse for work or legal purposes. They implore members of the Bar to cooperate fully with mask and distancing requirements without the need of deputies to admonish them to do so. They respectfully request that we support all of their efforts to keep the courthouse safe for all users in these challenging times.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any additional questions or concerns you may have, and I will try to get answers for you.

Take care everyone,
Tracey

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