

## **COVID-19 Circuit Court Operating Plan for Sawyer 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 Sawyer County will implement the following protective measures:

### **General**

Planning for reopening Sawyer County Circuit Court began in mid May. Judge John M Yackel and Clerk of Court Marge Kelsey have met numerous times, working on how to safely resume in person appearances. Judge Yackel and Clerk Kelsey consulted with the Sawyer County Public Health Officer, District Attorney, Public Defender, Maintenance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Emergency Management, 10<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court Administrator and County Administrator. The planning culminated with the following recommendations outlined in the Wisconsin COVID- 19 Task Force report:

This court will start non-essential in person hearings immediately upon the approval of this operating plan by the 10<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Chief Judge and the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

### **Judge and Court Staff Health**

Judges and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will continue to do so, whenever possible.

The following procedures have been implemented to monitor the health of Judge and Court Staff.

- Judges and court staff will practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hand hygiene recommendations at all time.
- Masks will be worn at all times. Masks and hand sanitizers will be available for all persons present in courtrooms, jury rooms and other court related confined spaces.

### **Scheduling**

The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:  
The judge will continue to use telephone hearings and Zoom as much as possible.

### **Vulnerable Populations**

Individuals who are over age 65 and individuals with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy are considered to be vulnerable populations.

Each judge will include information on orders setting hearings, dockets notices, and in other communications notifying individuals who are in vulnerable populations of the ability to

contact the court to identify themselves as a vulnerable individual and receive accommodations.

Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by using the telephone conference system or Zoom.

### **Social Distancing**

All persons not from the same household who are permitted in the court building will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet where practical.

#### *Gallery*

The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom has been determined and posted. 60 for Large Courtroom and 8 for Small Courtroom. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by the court.

#### *Jury Box*

Jurors will be seated in three rows of 4, staggered out to maximize social distancing.

#### *Well*

In each courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk, court reporter, and bailiff seating will have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.

### **Hygiene**

Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building, outside of each courtroom, and outside of bathrooms.

Disinfectant wipes or spray have been placed in the courtrooms, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, on the judges' benches, and in the hallways.

CDC flyers outlining appropriate hygiene, social distancing, or public safety have been posted in multiple locations in the courthouse.

### **Screening**

Sawyer County has no security screening at the main entrance. However, for jury trials health screening will be performed at the Kansas Street entrance as set forth in the Jury Trial Plan and social distancing and face covering requirements will be enforced by Court Security.

### **Face Coverings**

All members of the public entering the Sawyer County Courthouse for business other than court related business are encouraged to wear face coverings at all times.

All persons present in the courtrooms, jury rooms and court-related confined spaces shall wear face coverings. A witness will be required to wear a face covering until they sit in the witness stand. The witness stand is surrounded in Plexiglas so when testifying the witness may remove his/her face covering. After the witness is released from the witness stand they shall put their face covering back on until they leave the courtroom. Notices regarding this requirement will be posted at the entrance of each courtroom, jury room and court-related confined space and will state that the requirement will be enforced by the judge.

Individuals may bring face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a face covering, a disposable face covering will be provided by court staff.

Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for a judicial proceeding will be provided face coverings and required to wear them while in the courtroom.

**Cleaning**

Sawyer County cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned every morning.

Sawyer County cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms at the end of each day the courtroom is used.

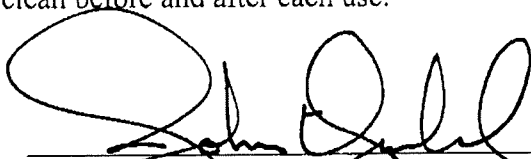
Sawyer County continuously runs the HVAC system.

Sawyer County cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.

Sawyer County cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

Cleaning wipes or cleaning spray and paper towels will be provided at counsel tables and anyone using the table will need to clean before and after each use.

Date: 7-9-2020

  
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Honorable John M. Yackel, Presiding Judge

Date: 7-13-2020

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Judge Approval

## **JURY TRIALS**

As an addendum to the Operating Plan filed with the Chief Judge of the Judicial District on July 1, 2020, this plan is developed to ensure the health and safety of jurors, litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals participating in jury trials. The courts of **Sawyer County** will implement the following additional protective measures related to jury trials:

### **Summoning Jurors**

Considerations have been made for the safety and wellbeing of jurors. The attached letter was developed and will be sent with the juror summons to each juror.

The Judge and Clerk of Court are using liberal deferral and excusal of jurors due to the pandemic.

The following protective measures, including expedited entrance into the courthouse,

Check-in that minimizes physical contact with documents, posting notice regarding hygiene and distancing practices, are in place for jurors who report to court.

When jurors attempt to enter the court building, **Sawyer County Health Dept.** will ask the individuals if they are feeling feverish; have a cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing; or have been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions will be refused admittance to the courthouse. If required to appear in court, the appropriate court office will be immediately notified.

When jurors attempt to enter the courthouse, **Sawyer County Health Dept.** will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.0°F will be refused admittance to the court building.

The seating chart will be prepared and upon entrance to the courthouse, the first 21 jurors for voir dire will be seated in the jury box and the front rows of the courtroom gallery.

### **Juror Attendance and Safe Participation**

Masks and hand sanitizer will be available to the jurors.

Social distancing of jurors will be through the following strategies:

Limiting the capacity in the courtroom, reconfiguring placement of counsel tables, court reporter, witness stand, and/or bench, using an alternate room for additional capacity and installing Plexiglas shields for the witness stand.

Conduct voir dire based on the capacity of the court room that will allow maximum possible social distancing, conduct in-person and virtual voir dire simultaneously, broadcast jury selection and limit or eliminate spectators in the courtroom, give priority to "strikes for cause" based on juror health and safety concerns.

After the jury has been empaneled, the following efforts have been made to accommodate maximum possible social distancing, but ensure that each juror has adequate sight lines to the witness stand and can hear and see all proceedings. Examples of such accommodations include use of technology and video monitors to increase sight lines, and handling of exhibits.

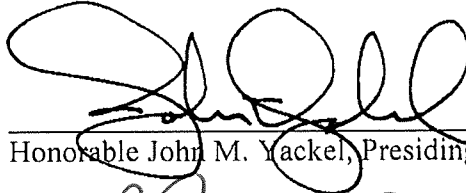
Social distancing consideration during trial breaks and deliberations: Juror deliberations to be held in the large courtroom, the Judge and attorneys will use the Small Courtroom or Jury room for all proceedings on the record outside the presence of the jury.

Due to capacity issues within the courtroom, virtual accommodations will be available for public view of the proceedings if necessary.

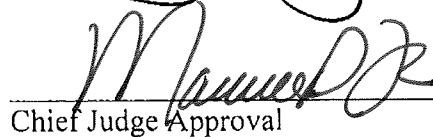
**Other**

Judges will begin setting jury trials no sooner than July 15, 2020. I will ensure that the judges with hearings in the courthouse covered by this Jury Trial Addendum will conduct proceedings consistent with the plan and the Addendum.

Date: 7-9-20

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Honorable John M. Yackel, Presiding Judge

Date: 7-13-2020

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Judge Approval

## **Sawyer County cares about our Juror's safety.**

The following safety measures have been implemented to keep you safe during your jury service.

Masks or face coverings are required to be worn by everyone entering the courtroom for this trial. Please bring your own mask or face covering with you. If you don't have one, we will provide you with one. Courtrooms and public spaces are regularly disinfected.

We have modified our usual procedures for jury selection and service so that Jurors will be spaced apart throughout the courtroom and assembly room.

Beverages are NOT allowed in the courtrooms and a communal coffee pot will NOT be available. Bottled water and soda WILL be provided.

**If you haven't signed up for text or email notifications, please do so now by calling (715) 634-4887.** Due to the pandemic there will be NO jury orientation.

PLEASE REPORT TO THE KANSAS STREET ENTRANCE OF THE COURTHOUSE (parking lot entrance.)

A public health care worker will be at the door to ask a few basic health questions and to take your temperature. The clerk will be there to sign you in and direct you to the appropriate area.

# CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT

Phone (715) 634-4887 ~ FAX (715)638-3297

## CLERK OF COURT

**Marge Kelsey**

10610 Main Street  
Suite #74  
Hayward, WI 54843



## DEPUTY CLERKS

Jill C Tonn  
Sari L Torstenson  
Terri J Roeske  
Leslie Strapon  
Lisa Turnbull

DATE

Dear Juror,

The Judge and Clerk of Court would like to thank you for your jury service. We want you to know that the health and well being of our jurors and community is very important to us.

Due to the recent Court Orders regarding Corona virus Covid-19, the Court will exercise social distancing where practical. The Court will provide face coverings, pens, paper, and disinfecting wipes; and the courtroom and jury room will be disinfected each day.

Individuals who are over age 65 and individuals with serious underlying health issues such as chronic lung disease, diabetes, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy are considered to be vulnerable populations. If you are in the vulnerable population, and would like to request to be excluded from jury service, please call 715-634-4887 regarding the medical condition and provide your Juror ID number and current telephone number. The Judge's office or Clerk of Courts office will contact you if your medical condition will excuse you from jury duty service.

If you need to request a postponement of jury service due to: vacation, business trip or a family event, you can do so online at: <https://juror.wicourts.gov/juror-postponement-request/search> . You should only request a postponement to delay your jury service if you have an urgent need.

Sincerely,

Marge Kelsey  
Clerk of Circuit Court