

**IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
GENERAL DIVISION
FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO**

22MS _____

**SIXTEENTH GENERAL ORDER IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19
(CORONAVIRUS) PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY**

The General Division Judges of the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas make the following Findings of Fact:

1. On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 to be a global “pandemic” requiring “urgent and aggressive action” to control the spread of the virus.
2. The Franklin County, City of Columbus and state of Ohio Departments of Health and the CDC recommend continued precautions against the spread of COVID-19.
3. Many members of the public having business before the Court remain unvaccinated and accurately ascertaining vaccination status is not possible.

Based upon these Findings of Fact, the General Division of the Court of Common Pleas developed protocols in response to this public health emergency. These protocols are intended to protect public health, maintain essential court functions, and continue to protect the rights of all individuals subject to the authority of the Court.

THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

1. The General Division Local Rules of Court may be temporarily modified to allow Court flexibility, within Constitutional limits, in response to COVID-19.
2. The General Division policies may be temporarily adjusted to maintain essential court operations and functions.
3. The General Division authorizes the use of audiovisual devices and technologies for all actions and proceedings.
4. The General Division has determined health concerns related to COVID-19 are good cause for continuances.

5. The General Division will have the lawful authority, within constitutional limits, to do or direct to be done all things necessary to ensure the orderly and efficient administration of justice and public safety.
6. Beginning November 1, 2021, the Court will operate utilizing a rotating docket schedule **for jury trials only** through April 1, 2022 (**This date will not be extended**). To allow sufficient distancing of jurors and participants, jury trials will be held in the respective judicial courtrooms utilizing the following schedule:

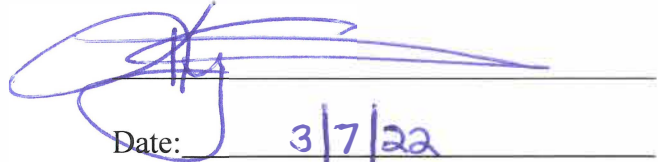
Judicial Courtrooms A and E	Judicial Courtrooms B and F
Alternating weeks beginning	Alternating weeks beginning
November 1, 2021	November 8, 2021
Continuing through the week ending	Continuing through the week ending
March 25, 2022	April 1, 2022

All other in-person proceedings may be held at any time. An ‘off-rotation’ courtroom may hold a jury trial provided the ‘on-rotation’ chamber mate courtroom is not in a jury trial. This will maintain a maximum of two judicial trials per floor per week. Magistrates (courtrooms C and D) are not subject to the jury trial rotation.

7. Effective March 8, 2022, masks are not required to be worn in the Courthouse, Probation Department (369 S. High Street, 4th, 5th, and 6th floors) and IT offices (373 S. High Street, 8th floor) with the following exceptions:
 - a. A Judge or Magistrate, at their own discretion, may require masks in her/his respective chambers and courtroom.
 - b. Individuals may choose to mask at any time, especially if the individual is immunocompromised, unvaccinated or at high risk for severe outcomes of COVID-19.
8. All individuals in the courthouse and the Probation Department shall adhere to the 6-foot social distancing protocols in all areas except for:
 - a. Common areas (hallways)
 - b. Areas where a Judge or Magistrate may determine social distancing is not required with respect to her/his chambers and courtroom.
9. The Court will issue an Order when normal operations resume.

10. This Order supersedes any provision in Orders 20MS156, 20MS159, 20MS168, 20MS198, 20MS283, 20MS603, 20MS608, 21MS59, 21MS82, 21MS107, 21MS275, 21MS358, 21MS358, and 21MS482 that are inconsistent with this Order.

HON. KIMBERLY COCROFT
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE



Date: 3/7/22