

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA**

**IN RE: COURT OPERATIONS
UNDER THE EXIGENT
CIRCUMSTANCES
CREATED BY COVID-19**

Case No. 4:95mc40111

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have warned of the threat represented by the outbreak and spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the United States. The World Health Organization labelled COVID-19 a global pandemic and the President of the United States and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis have declared a public health emergency throughout the United States and the State of Florida, respectively. According to these and other public health experts, social distancing, covering the mouth and nose with a cloth face covering in public areas, practicing good hand hygiene by washing or disinfecting hands frequently, disinfecting commonly touched surfaces on a daily basis, and monitoring your health are the most effective measures to combat the rapid spread of COVID-19 and prevent illness.

In consideration of the serious and continued health crisis facing the nation and the State of Florida from COVID-19 and in an effort to maintain the orderly administration of justice, the Court finds it necessary and in the interest of public safety and justice to take proactive measures to slow the spread of the virus and protect the health and safety of Court staff, litigants, counsel, grand jurors, petit jurors, witnesses, and the public through the following measures.

1. As part of the Northern District of Florida's Continuity of Operations Plan, all Court staff have been issued equipment to allow them to effectively telework from home or other secure location and all staff have received assistance testing the equipment to ensure remote connectivity. Those staff who do not need to be in the courthouse to perform their duties, as determined by their appointing officer, have been directed to telework.
2. Hearings and other appearances before the Court may be held remotely by video or telephone conference or in-person at a courthouse, as determined appropriate by the assigned judge.
3. To prepare for the need to hold hearings with incarcerated individuals without transporting those individuals to a Court location, Clerk's Office staff have

worked with the United States Marshals Service, the Bureau of Prisons, and local jails to ensure, wherever possible, the existence of video conference equipment and the infrastructure needed to hold video conference hearings with incarcerated individuals from within these facilities.

4. All staff and visitors are required to monitor their health on a daily basis and are further required to notify the Court if they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or if they feel ill or exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms.

5. Pursuant to this Court's June 26, 2020, Administrative Order, (Dkt. 362), all persons who enter any courthouse within the Northern District of Florida are required to practice social distancing measures and to wear a cloth face mask covering the person's nose and mouth while in any public or common area within the courthouse. Signs informing occupants and visitors of these requirements have been posted throughout each facility.

6. Hand sanitizer has been made available in all courthouse locations and signs reminding occupants and visitors to wash or sanitize their hands frequently have been posted throughout each facility.

7. All commonly touched surfaces within each courthouse are cleaned and disinfected on a daily basis.

8. To prevent and slow the spread of the virus, any occupant or courthouse visitor who tests positive for COVID-19 within 14 days of entering a courthouse in the Northern District of Florida, should immediately provide notice, directly or through an appropriate representative (e.g., other non-judiciary federal employer, family member), to the Court.

9. Upon notification that an individual has tested positive for COVID-19, the Court will follow CDC recommendations and make sure that appropriate action is taken to prevent further spread of the virus. This action includes, but is not limited to: ensuring that all areas visited by the individual are appropriately cleaned and disinfected; performing contact tracing to identify those who were potentially exposed and provide notice and CDC guidance to those individuals; requiring staff who were in close contact with the individual to quarantine; and taking appropriate actions to ensure that those individuals who have tested positive for, been exposed to, or exhibited symptoms consistent with COVID-19 meet CDC recommendations

regarding testing, health screening, and quarantine requirements, prior to reentering a courthouse.

The Court recognizes that this situation continues to evolve and will issue additional Administrative Orders as necessary based on recommendations from other federal and state government and health officials.

DONE AND ORDERED this 12th day of August, 2020.

s/ Mark E. Walker

Chief United States District Judge