

**COURT HEALTH AND SAFETY OPERATING PLAN  
CIRCUIT COURT, NINTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT,  
RIVERTON, FREMONT COUNTY, WYOMING**

**Fremont County Justice Center -Riverton  
1160 Major Ave., Suite 100  
Riverton, WY 82501**

June 22, 2020

*The underlying purpose of this Court Health and Safety Operating Plan (Plan) is to help maintain and ensure the health and safety of our staff, our families and the community, while providing quality and timely services through commonsense guidelines designed to help us all safely and effectively carry out our duties as the building reopens and select in-person hearings resume.*

*This Plan describes the health and safety procedures and protocols deemed necessary to limit the risk of contracting COVID-19 in our operations generally, in the court office and in the courtroom.*

**I. GENERALLY**

1. The judge and all court staff will make reasonable and necessary efforts to comply with the Orders and Guidance provided by the Wyoming Supreme Court; the Wyoming Department of Health; the Fremont County Public Health Department; and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This information can be found at:

<https://www.courts.state.wy.us/coronavirus-covid-19-updates/>

<https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/infectious-disease-epidemiology-unit/disease/novel-coronavirus/covid-19-orders-and-guidance/>

<http://fremontcountywy.org/public-health/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

2. This Plan will be effective immediately upon final approval by the Wyoming Supreme Court. It may be modified to address ongoing local health and safety concerns.
3. Unless otherwise ordered by the Wyoming Supreme Court, no jury trials will be conducted until after August 3, 2020. No jury trials will be conducted until the Wyoming Supreme

Court has issued its order adopting its COVID-19 jury trial guidelines and procedures, and this Plan has been approved by the Wyoming Supreme Court.

4. All non-essential in-person hearings will remain suspended until this Plan has been submitted to and approved by the Wyoming Supreme Court.
5. It is anticipated, that if health and safety conditions permit and the operating plans have been approved, some select in-person hearings may begin to occur starting the week of July 13, 2020.
6. Nonetheless, all reasonable efforts will be made to continue scheduling and conducting hearings (when permitted by law/rule) using video or telephone conferencing.
7. When setting and conducting hearings, the court and court staff will make reasonable efforts to mitigate the impact on vulnerable populations. Specifically,
  - a. Vulnerable individuals are those 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.
  - b. In any communications or orders setting in-person hearings there shall be some form of notification to individuals who are in vulnerable populations of the ability to contact the court to receive reasonable accommodations, which the court will provide.

Similar notices should be placed conspicuously throughout the courthouse.

8. The judge and court staff will be prepared to adjust the procedures and protocols described in this Plan to accommodate individuals with disabilities.

## **II. COURT OFFICE HEALTH & SAFETY**

1. Court staff will continue to work at the court unless they are directed to work remotely due to health and safety concerns associated with the novel coronavirus.
2. The judge and court staff should be mindful of, and make all reasonable efforts to comply with, the following guidelines concerning social distancing and hygiene:
  - a. The judge and court staff will practice safe social distancing (at least 6 feet) while working at their workstations, and while passing through, or working in, common

areas such as the hallways, the front counter, the front workstation, individual workstations, the break room, the employee entrance, and the restroom vestibule.

- b. If social distancing cannot be maintained in common and public spaces, staff are encouraged to wear face masks and take other protective measures (face masks will be provided).
  - c. Wash hands often according to the well-established health guidelines.
  - d. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
  - e. Follow proper etiquette if you need to sneeze or cough.
3. The judge and court staff will clean, sanitize and disinfect the Court Office regularly.
- a. Hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, and sanitizing spray with clean rags have been provided for use throughout the Court Office. These products should be kept at every workstation, at the front counter, in the break room, and in the restrooms. They should be used regularly and liberally.
  - b. The disinfecting wipes and sanitizing spray will be used to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as telephones, countertops, desktops, keyboards, light switches, doorknobs, sinks, filing cabinets, printers, the copier and office equipment.
  - c. Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned periodically throughout the day. The entire Court Office, including personal workstations and commons areas, should be cleaned at the end of each day.
4. The judge and court staff shall continually monitor their own health.
- a. ANYONE feeling feverish or having a temperature of 99.6°F or higher, or who is experiencing new or worsening signs or symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea, **or** having known close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19, **must contact his/her immediate supervisor and remain home until further instruction is provided by the judge and/or chief clerk.** Seek immediate medical advice.
  - b. If the judge or member of the court staff is confirmed positive for the coronavirus or is diagnosed with COVID-19 they must remain quarantined for a minimum of

fourteen days. The Court Office will be quarantined for a period determined by the Wyoming Supreme Court and/or county health officials.

### **III. COURTROOM HEALTH AND SAFETY**

*The purpose of this portion of the Plan is to help maintain and ensure the health and safety of our community with commonsense guidelines that will allow us to safely and effectively carry out our duties as and when in-person hearings resume in the courtroom.*

*The Court will continue to use video and telephone conferences for court proceedings during the pandemic. This portion of the plan will apply to litigants and their lawyers as well as all other person involved in select courtroom proceedings.*

#### ***Proposed Start Date:***

If health and safety conditions in Fremont County permit, select in-person hearings may begin the week of July 13, 2020.

#### ***Scheduling:***

1. All reasonable efforts will be made to continue scheduling and conducting hearings (when permitted by law/rule) by video or telephone conferencing using Microsoft Teams.

2. When setting and conducting hearings, the court and court staff will make reasonable efforts to mitigate the impact on vulnerable populations.

a. Vulnerable individuals include those who are: over the age of 65; living in a nursing home or long-term care facility; suffering from serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, liver disease, kidney disease undergoing dialysis, diabetes, obesity, asthma; and those whose with compromised immune systems, such as those receiving chemotherapy or other cancer treatment, bone marrow or organ transplants, or suffering from HIV, AIDS or other type of immunodeficiency disease.

b. In any communications or orders setting in-person hearings there will be some form of notification to individuals who are in vulnerable populations of the ability to contact the court to receive reasonable accommodations (such as appearing via video or telephone), which the court will, as permitted by law, provide.

Also, notices to vulnerable individuals will be conspicuously placed throughout the court.

3. The timing and duration of court hearings may deviate from traditional scheduling

patterns to help accommodate changes set forth in this operating plan.

4. The court will make reasonable efforts to coordinate schedules to avoid multiple in-person hearings at the same time and make reasonable efforts to avoid “back-to-back” in-person hearings.

5. The Circuit Court Clerk will continue to accept filings by appointment, as well as limited in-person filings subject to the schedule and conditions provided in this plan.

### ***Social Distancing Court Staff:***

1. The judge and court staff will continue to comply with the well-known guidelines concerning social distancing and hygiene in their dealings with the public in the courtroom and at the clerk’s counter, namely: a minimum of six feet between individuals; regular hand washing; avoid touching eyes, nose, mouth; and regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces as described in more detail in Part II above.

2. The Circuit Court office will remain closed to the public/attorneys.

3. The Circuit Court office will allow limited in-person public access to the court lobby as set described below and will permit business to be conducted by appointment (e.g. search warrants).

### ***Social Distancing Among the Public:***

#### ***Court Hearings Generally***

1. Consistent with the terms and conditions of this Plan, the court may develop and implement more detailed protocols for carrying out the general provisions set forth in this plan regarding in-person court hearings.

2. Consistent with social distancing guidelines, and as limited by space constraints, public access to in-person court hearings may be limited to counsel, parties, witnesses and select members of the public. Those not permitted to attend in person will be allowed to attend via video/telephone conferencing.

3. Counsel, parties, and select members of the public will not be allowed into the *court building* until 15 minutes prior their scheduled court hearing, or until the participants of any prior in-person hearing in that courtroom have left the building – whichever occurs nearer to the time of the scheduled hearing.

4. Witnesses shall wait outside the building until they are called by counsel to testify. To accommodate this requirement, the court will allow counsel to use the text/email function of their cellphones/computer devices to communicate with the witness when it is time to enter the building.

If waiting outside the building is not feasible (i.e. for security reasons) arrangements will be made to allow witnesses to wait at a designated location within the court building.

5. All attorneys, parties, witnesses, and select members of the public shall leave the courtroom and court building as soon as possible after their hearing has concluded, and they must avoid congregating in the building.

6. Inmates being transported from jail to court for a hearing shall be screened prior to transport for symptoms of COVID-19, including taking their temperatures. Inmates with symptoms, including a temperature equal to or above 99.6 degrees Fahrenheit, or those having close contact with a known COVID-19 positive individual shall not be transported to the court building, and the court and counsel shall be notified as soon as possible of this situation.

### ***Court Filings & Other Business with Clerks' Offices***

1. The Circuit Court office will be open to the public for in-person business Monday through Friday from 9:00a.m. to 12:00p.m., and 1:15p.m. to 3:30p.m.

2. The Circuit Court office will continue to conduct business during normal business hours by appointment, and in the same fashion as they have since March 17, 2020.

3. Those conducting in-person business with the Circuit Court office should enter individually and should not bring family, friends or others unless necessary.

4. The number of people allowed to wait in line to access the Circuit Court offices may be limited by the court security offices to prevent congregating and to maintain safe social distancing consistent with this Plan.

### ***Entry to Court Building – Screening & Notices – For Everyone***

1. A notice will be conspicuously posted on the entry door advising all persons that access will be denied if they are or feel sick, and that they should call the court clerk to make alternative arrangements to file documents or appear in court. Specifically,

*ANYONE feeling feverish or having measured temperatures equal to or greater than 99.6°F, or with new or worsening signs or symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea, or having known close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19, will be denied access to and should seek immediate medical advice.*

2. A notice will be conspicuously posted on the entry doors, courtroom doors, and throughout the court building notifying members of vulnerable populations that: 1) they should not enter the court building; 2) that if they have already entered the building they should exit

immediately; and 3) that they will be provided directions to make alternative arrangements to conduct their business.

*VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS include, but are not limited to, those who are: Over the age of 65; living in a nursing home or long-term care facility; suffering from serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, liver disease, kidney disease undergoing dialysis, diabetes, obesity, asthma; and those whose with compromised immune systems, such as those receiving chemotherapy or other cancer treatment, bone marrow or organ transplants, or suffering from HIV, AIDS or other type of immunodeficiency disease.*

3. Anyone entering the Justice Center to attend court hearings or to conduct business with the court office must enter through the main doors and will be screened by Court Security prior to entry. This screening includes, but is not limited to:

- a. Observation and questioning of those who enter to determine if they have any COVID-19 symptoms or have been in contact with anyone who is confirmed to have COVID-19. Anyone exhibiting the symptoms of COVID-19 or having recent contact with a confirmed case will not be allowed into the building, and alternative arrangements will be made to address their needs.
- b. Court security will have an infrared touchless thermometer available to aid in determining the temperature of an individual, and those with a temperature of 99.6 degrees Fahrenheit will not be allowed into the court building. Alternative arrangements will be made to address their needs.
- c. Observation and questioning of those who enter the building will be made regarding their status as a vulnerable individual, and they will be notified of their ability to make alternative arrangements to avoid having to enter the court building.
- d. Court Security will require everyone to use hand sanitizer before they are allowed to proceed beyond the court security/screening station.
- e. Court Security will continue to conduct standard screening procedures such as questioning, observation and use of magnetometer to prevent contraband, weapons, or other inappropriate items from being brought into the court building.

4. Notices will be conspicuously posted on the entry doors, courtroom doors, and throughout the court building notifying all those entering or planning to enter the court building must comply with the following *social distancing and hygiene guidelines*:

- a. Maintain social distance - six feet – from all others, and for that purpose must stand on the ground/floor markings while waiting and proceed on the marked path toward the courtroom. Only one person will be allowed into the court vestibule at a time. The next person in line must wait until the person ahead has cleared and moved past the security/screening.

- b. Only twelve people will be allowed in the courtroom gallery per session. If there are more than twelve people scheduled, they will be allowed in first come, first served, and the other will have to wait outside the courthouse. Court security will signal when it is time for the next session.
- c. Wear acceptable face coverings (individuals must bring their own face coverings; however, the court will have a limited supply of facemasks for those who do not have, or are not able to obtain, a face covering).
- d. Sanitize hands before entering the courtroom. A sanitizer station will be provided outside of the courtroom. Hand sanitizer, bleach wipes and tissues will be provided inside the courtroom.
- e. Must comply with all signs, markings and barriers located throughout the court building and courtrooms, which will help notify entrants where to sit and stand to help ensure social distancing regarding seating in the courtroom and waiting in line at clerks' offices. The judge, and clerks will mark and close certain areas to comply with social distancing.
- f. Upon entering the courtroom, the person shall proceed without delay to the first available row, closest to the front of the gallery, with unoccupied marked seat(s). The person shall choose a marked seat closest to the exterior wall. In this manner the seats will be filled from front to back and from the outside toward the aisles to eliminate people passing or sitting within six feet of any other person.
- g. Use hand sanitizer provided at the counsel tables.
- h. Nobody will be allowed to wander within the building or the courtroom.
- i. People with disabilities such as lack of mobility or hearing loss, should immediately notify court security at the security/screening station, either court staff or court security will assist them and make accommodations as needed.
- j. All individuals must leave as soon as possible after their business is concluded and shall not congregate or linger at the front entrance.

### ***Cleaning and Miscellaneous:***

1. The Courts, Courts' staff, Clerks' Offices, Court Security, counsel, parties, witnesses and members of the public having business before the courts and Clerks' Offices should make reasonable efforts to comply with the Orders and Guidance provided by the Wyoming Supreme Court; the Wyoming Department of Health; the Fremont County Public Health Department; and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This information can be found at:





