

**FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT**  
**DISTRICT COURTS' CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**  
**JURY TRIAL OPERATIONAL PLAN**

I. **INTRODUCTION** -- Jury Trials are an essential and guaranteed part of our Judicial System. The First Judicial District Courts must, when the time is appropriate and it is determined to be safe, reconvene jury trials. The Wyoming Supreme Court's Covid-19 Pandemic Orders and Guidelines require all Wyoming District Courts to adopt and file a Jury Trial Operational Plan before reconvening jury trials. Therefore, the First Judicial District Court Judges adopt the following Jury Trial Operational Plan.

II. **DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION TO PUBLIC**

A. **Informational Letter**. A letter, attached as **Exhibit A**, will be mailed to each potential juror explaining the precautions the district courts are taking to protect the jury trial participants from the coronavirus.

B. **Updating Websites**: The Clerk of District Court will upload important documents and information onto her website, including the First Judicial District Court's Jury Trial Operational Plan and the screening form jurors will be required to complete upon arrival at the courthouse for jury service.

III. **SCREENING OF POTENTIAL JURORS PRIOR TO DAY OF TRIAL**

A. **High Risk Individuals**: Potential Jurors who satisfy the CDC's criteria of high risk for severe illness from Covid-19 will, upon request, be excused from juror service during the ongoing pandemic.

1. All potential jurors will be notified prior to coming to the courthouse that they may request to be excused from jury

service during the pandemic if they qualify under the CDC guidelines as high risk for severe illness from Covid-19.

B. **Additional Jurors:** The Clerk of District Court will summon additional jurors for each trial in anticipation of more disqualifications for cause.

#### IV. PREPARATION OF THE COURTHOUSE FOR JURY TRIALS

A. **Proper Ventilation:** Research indicates that proper air flow can help limit the spread of Covid-19. The District Court has investigated the Courthouse air ventilation system and has been informed as follows:

1. Laramie County recently installed a new ventilation control system with all new equipment and each area has been recently balanced.

2. The air turnover rate is approximately every two hours, and the ventilation system runs seven days a week from 4:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. The system was recently balanced to assure the proper percentage of outside air flow.

3. The ventilation system includes all recommended seals and filters. There are filters located at each VAV-box, which filters air being dispersed through zoned air drops. Filters are replaced quarterly.

B. As often as possible and in compliance with legal requirements and mandates, the Courtroom doors will remain open to increase ventilation

C. **Increased Cleaning:** The courtrooms and jury rooms will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected every evening and during the lunch break. The witness stand area will be cleaned with disinfectant between witnesses.

D. **Circuit Court Coordination:** The District Courts will coordinate the scheduling of jury trials in District Court with the Circuit Court schedules.

## **V. REQUIRED PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

### **A. Facial Coverings:**

1. All in-person participants in a jury trial will be required to wear a facial covering while inside the courthouse and for all trial proceedings.

2. Facial coverings must cover the mouth and nose and be worn properly.

3. The Clerk of District Court will provide facial coverings to those potential jurors who do not bring their own. Facial coverings worn during a jury trial shall not include any recognizable written words, symbols, or convey any message.

4. A participant in the trial proceedings may be permitted to remove a facial covering if another approved personal protection device is provided. For example, approved plexiglass dividers.

5. A participant who is unable to wear a facial covering because of a valid medical or mental health related condition will be provided another acceptable and approved protective device or, if possible, excused from the proceedings.

### **B. Gloves:**

1. Disposable and sterile gloves will be provided to participants upon request. Disposable and sterile gloves will be worn by bailiffs throughout the proceedings.

## **VI. CONTACT TRACING**

A. All persons and participants attending any portion of a public jury trial shall be required to provide the court with their current name, address, and phone number for purposes of contact tracing in the event of potential exposure during the proceedings.

## **VII. ARRIVAL OF JURORS AT COURTHOUSE**

**A. Signage:** Posters will be prominently posted outside the courthouse and outside the District Court courtroom listing Covid-19 symptoms and directing individuals with symptoms to not enter the courthouses or courtroom, if they are experiencing any Covid-19 symptoms.

1. Signs will also be posted which direct potential jurors to the health screening area and remind all persons to maintain proper social distancing.

**B. Security Screening:** As with all persons coming to the District Courts, potential jurors will first be required to pass through the security screening entrance. No potential juror will be permitted to pass through security without a proper facial covering. If a potential juror does not have a proper facial covering, that potential juror will not be permitted to pass through security. If necessary, potential jurors will be provided with facial coverings.

**C. Health Screening:** Because all jury trials during the coronavirus pandemic must be conducted in the largest courtroom, Courtroom D on the second floor of the courthouse, a check-in table will be set up on the second floor. At the check-in table potential jurors will be appropriately socially distanced with clear markings on the floor or in designated socially distanced seating. Each juror will have his or her temperature taken at security or at the check-in table and will be required to complete a health screening form, which is attached as Exhibit B. The court will arrange seating in the common area for potential jurors, who are awaiting health screening to assure proper social distancing.

1. If a potential juror's temperature is 100.4° or greater, they will be asked to return to their vehicle and await further telephonic contact from the Clerk of District Court.

2. If a potential juror's answers on the health screening reflect that the potential juror has an increased risk of infection from the coronavirus, they will be asked to return to their vehicle and await further telephonic contact from the Clerk of District Court.

**D. Seating after Screenings: Once a potential juror has successfully passed through the security and health screenings, a member of the Clerk of District Court's staff or a bailiff will escort the juror into the courtroom to sit in a designated seat which is properly socially distanced from all other participants. Jurors will be required to use hand sanitizer before entering the courtroom. Both the gallery area and the jury box will be utilized. (Numerous hand sanitizer dispensers will be located throughout the courtroom to allow the jurors frequent access)**

**E. Bottled water will be provided by the court for the jurors. No outside water bottles will be permitted.**

## **VIII. VOIR DIRE**

**A. Generally: *Voir dire* will be conducted in subpanels because an entire panel cannot be properly socially distanced in the courtroom.**

**B. Specific Process: The Court will summon 30 potential jurors at a time. The first subpanel of 30 potential jurors will be summoned for 8:00 a.m. and the second subpanel at 1:00 p.m.**

**1. Following the security and health screening process, the Clerk of District Court will provide a brief orientation to the potential jurors about jury service and the coronavirus precautions.**

**2. The Court will qualify jurors and ask the jury the bulk of the questions (including standard questions concerning knowledge of the parties and witnesses, friends and family members in law enforcement, burden of proof, etc.).**

**3. Each side will then be given 20 minutes to conduct *voir dire*. Counselors' *voir dire* shall be conducted from counsel tables, not from the podium.**

**4. During *voir dire*, the court will encourage members of the subpanel to speak up when responding, to avoid having to circulate and clean the hand-held microphone. If necessary, the court will allow use of the hand-held microphone but will require the microphone to be properly disinfected between each use.**

5. If necessary, the Court will conduct private *voir dire* arising during *voir dire* after each side's 20-minute questioning. Private *voir dire* will be conducted in a separate room in the courthouse which will allow for proper social distancing.

6. After the first subpanel is passed for cause, the Court will then excuse the first sub-panel. Before excusing the potential jurors, the Court will inform the potential jurors in the first subpanel that the Clerk of District Court will call them that afternoon to let them know whether they have been selected for jury service.

7. Between subpanels, county cleaning staff will use disinfecting spray on all common surfaces including, but not limited to, gallery, counsel tables, podium (if used), and microphones.

8. *Voir dire* of the second subpanel shall be conducted in the same manner as the that of the first subpanel.

9. After the second subpanel has been passed for cause, the Court will then excuse the second sub-panel. Before excusing the potential jurors, the Court will inform the potential jurors in the second subpanel that the Clerk of District Court will call them that afternoon to let them know whether they have been selected for jury service and when to report to the courthouse.

10. Following the release of the second subpanel, peremptory challenges will then be conducted by counsel and the court.

11. Depending on the nature and expected length of the jury trial, the court will consider keeping two alternate jurors.

## **IX. SEATING THE JURY**

A. **Generally:** The jurors selected for service will be socially distanced. This means some jurors will be seated in the jury box and some in the gallery area of the courtroom. Those jurors seated in the gallery area of the courtroom will be distinctly physically separated from any public area of the courtroom which may be available for public

**seating. Jurors will be placed in positions where they have a direct line of sight to the witness stand.**

**1. All jurors must wear approved and proper fitting facial coverings throughout the proceedings. A selected juror who is unable to wear a facial covering because of a valid medical or mental health related condition will be provided another acceptable and approved protective device. If requested, jurors will also be provided sterile disposable gloves.**

**2. When the jury enters and exits the courtroom, the bailiffs will open and shut all doors. Bailiffs will escort the jury to and from the designated jury room.**

**3. The regular Courtroom D jury room will not be utilized as the jury room because its size does not allow for proper social distancing. Instead, either Courtroom A or B on the third floor will be the designated jury room. The doors between courtrooms A and B and courtrooms A and B's jury room will remain open whenever the jury is in courtroom A or B to allow access to the restrooms and for better ventilation. (Numerous hand sanitizer dispensers will be located throughout courtrooms A or B to allow the jurors frequent access. Disposable sterile gloves will also be provided.)**

## **X. CONDUCTING THE TRIAL**

**A. Generally: All jury trials in Laramie County District Courts will be conducted in courtroom D, which is the largest of the four courtrooms. All participants in the jury trial including judges, attorneys, parties, witnesses, bailiffs, clerks, and jurors, will be required to wear proper facial coverings and to maintain social distancing throughout the proceedings. At the discretion of the Judge, facial coverings may not be required for those participants seated in an area with proper plexiglass dividers. Hand sanitizer will be located at each entrance to the courtroom for participants and observers to use when entering the courtroom.**

**B. Health Screening: Each day, all participants in the trial and members of the public and press will have his or her temperature taken and will be required to complete the health screening form.**

**C. Number of Attorneys: Unless good cause is demonstrated, each side will be allowed no more than two attorneys in the courtroom at one time. No other staff or investigators will be permitted in the courtroom except with the consent of the court and only if social distancing can be maintained.**

**D. Use of the Podium: Attorneys will conduct opening statements, closing arguments, and witness examination from the attorney tables and not use the podium, to avoid the need for repetitive cleaning.**

**E. Sidebars: Sidebars will be conducted in Courtroom D's jury room, which will allow for proper social distancing and be outside the jury's presence. In the alternative, a remote and separate communication system, if available, may be used during sidebars.**

**F. Witness Stand: The witness stand will be cleaned and disinfected between each witness, allowing sufficient time for the applied disinfectant to activate.**

**G. Exhibits: All exhibits shall be presented electronically, unless an exhibit cannot be electronically displayed. Physical or hard copies of electronic exhibits shall not be used. Courtroom D is equipped with numerous large screen monitors and inputs for electronic and digital display of exhibits. If a party seeks to have an exhibit published, the party may use available technology to publish the exhibit. Each party is expected to bring a laptop that can display exhibits on the available monitors. Attorneys should familiarize themselves with Courtroom D's digital equipment before trial begins if they plan to use it.**

**1. To the extent physical exhibits are necessary, any person handling exhibits during the trial must sanitize their hands and wear gloves when handling exhibits.**

**2. All exhibits provided to jurors for deliberation shall be provided by a single person assigned by the Court. That person**



shall handle the documents only with sterile disposable gloves and wear a facial covering while handling the exhibits.

H. **Attorney-Party Communication**: Attorneys and clients will be permitted to use cellphones, tablets, or other electronic devices at counsel table to communicate with each other privately. **RECORDING THE PROCEEDINGS IS, HOWEVER, EXPRESSLY PROHIBITED.** See Rule 803 of the U.R.D.C., and Rule 53, W.R.Cr.P.

I. **More Frequent Recesses**: The court will take more frequent recesses of greater length to allow all participants to go outside the courthouse for fresh air and to allow the courtroom's ventilation system to circulate new air.

j. **Public and Press Access**: The court will provide a designated area for members of the public to observe public trials. Members of the press will be allowed to use the designated press room for Courtroom D. Any member of the public or the press attending a public trial shall be required to comply with each of the protective measures imposed on the participants, including all health screenings, facial coverings, social distancing, and contact tracing. Public and press access to the public trial may be limited due to the requirement of social distancing. If available and approved by the Judge, audio and video streaming of the trial may be permitted.

## **XI. JURY INSTRUCTIONS**

A. The court will conduct the instruction conference either in the courtroom with the jury excused or in Courtroom D's jury room to allow for proper social distancing.

B. Copies of instructions provided to jurors for deliberation shall be provided by a single person assigned by the Court. That person shall handle the instructions only with sterile disposable gloves and wear a facial covering while handling the instructions.

C. Juror notebooks provided to jurors shall be provided by a single person assigned by the Court. That person shall handle the

notebooks only with sterile disposable gloves and wear a facial covering while handling the notebooks.

## XII. JURY DELIBERATIONS

A. Deliberations will be conducted in either Courtroom A or B. The Court will ensure that microphones and cameras are disabled during deliberations. The jury will be instructed that the chosen foreperson is responsible for assuring compliance with the facial coverings and social distancing requirements during deliberations.

## XIII. TRIAL PARTICIPANT BECOMES SICK OR INFECTED

A. In the event that a trial participant becomes ill with Covid-19 symptoms during or within 72 hours after the trial, the court will immediately contact state and local public health officials to determine the proper protocols to follow.

  
District Court Judge

8/17/20  
Date

  
District Court Judge

8/12/2020  
Date

  
District Court Judge

8/12/2020  
Date

  
District Court Judge

8/12/2020  
Date

  
Stan Hartman, M.D.  
County Public Health Officer

8/12/2020  
Date



STATE OF WYOMING

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FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Dear Potential Jurors:

First, from all of us, thank you for contributing to our justice system by being potential jurors. Our system depends upon you and we thank you!

All of you were summoned for jury service in March but until now have not been called because the COVID-19 pandemic has, to date, kept us from conducting jury trials. We expect to resume jury trial operations in the very near future and are taking this opportunity to assure you that we are doing everything in our power to make your experience serving as a juror safe.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, our courts have taken precautions to ensure your safety when we ask you to do your civic duty and serve as jurors. These measures include:

**Health screenings for all potential jurors before entering the courtrooms**

**Social distancing before entering and within all courtrooms**

**Personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer) provided by the courts**

**Thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting courtrooms routinely throughout the day**

Please leave your water containers at home. The Court will provide bottles of water when you are seated in the courtroom.

No one can guarantee that any of us will not be exposed to coronavirus. However, we have developed these protective measures, in accordance with State and County public health guidance, to minimize any risk to your health and give

you comfort that we are looking out for your safety when you come to our courtrooms.

If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions for us to make your experience at the courthouse better, please let us know.

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Steven Sharpe  
District Judge

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Thomas Campbell  
District Judge

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Catherine Rogers  
District Judge

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Peter Froelicher  
District Judge

CASE NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

JUDGE: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTORNEYS: \_\_\_\_\_

BAILIFFS: \_\_\_\_\_

COURT SECURITY: \_\_\_\_\_

START TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

END TIME: \_\_\_\_\_



**ARE YOU EXPERIENCING, OR HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS, ANY OF THE FOLLOWING (Check Mark Indicates No Symptom Reported)**

	Juror	Temp.	Exposure to Covid-19	Fever or chills	Cough	Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing	Fatigue	Muscle/body aches	Headache	New loss of taste or smell	Sore throat	Congestion or runny nose	Nausea or vomiting	Diarrhea
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Completed By: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_