

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
WITHIN AND FOR SWEETWATER COUNTY, WYOMING**

COVID 19 OPERATION PLAN

Courthouse: Sweetwater County Justice Center – Courthouse
Address: 50140C US Hwy 191 South, Rock Springs, Wyoming
Judges: Judge John R. Prokos
Judge Craig L. Jones

Proposed Start Date of Select In-Person Proceedings: July 29, 2020

This Operating Plan does not include jury trials. Pursuant to the Wyoming Supreme Court’s Fourth Order Amending March 18, 2020 Temporary Plan to Address Health Risks Posed by the Covid-19 Pandemic, no jury trials should be held until a Covid-19 Jury Trial Operating Plan is submitted to the Wyoming Supreme Court, and in any case, not before August 3, 2020.

The following measures will be implemented for all other in-person proceedings and court business.

1. Scheduling

Circuit courts will, to the fullest extent possible, schedule and conduct as many court hearings via video or teleconference as permitted by applicable law and court rules. Circuit court schedules are available at the courthouse entrance or may be confirmed by telephone. For information on how to appear by video or teleconference if you are a member of the public, media, or vulnerable population member please call the Clerks of the Circuit Court at 307-922-5220.

Circuit courts will coordinate schedules for in-person appearances to avoid having too many people entering the courthouse at the same time.

Circuit courts will refrain from scheduling multiple, simultaneous hearings in a number that would jeopardize social distancing, for example, mass criminal hearing calendars or high-volume small claims calendars.

2. Social Distancing

A. Among Court Staff: *(e.g. Staggered work shifts, plexiglass at clerk's window, seating arranged 6' apart, etc.)*

Court staff will continue to social distance (minimum of six feet). Court staff includes all employees regularly working within the Circuit Courts Clerk's Office, Drug Court Offices, or chambers of the Sweetwater County Circuit Courthouse.

B. Among Public: *(e.g. Remote check-ins and scheduled arrival times, floor markers and signage indicating 6' of distance, one-way traffic markers, seating arranged 6' apart, etc.)*

Notices will be posted that the public:

1. Must maintain social distance (six feet between persons not from the same household) at all times, including in hallways, lobbies, and courtrooms.
2. Must sanitize hands before entering courthouse.

Seating in hallways and courthouse lobbies has been separated to maintain proper social distance and all persons will follow such distancing requirements.

The Clerk of Circuit Court's office has an existing safety glass barrier, but the office will remain open with limited access to the public at this time. The public will wait outside of the clerks' lobby doors until directed to enter by a clerk and approach the counter. Any persons waiting to enter the clerks' lobby will practice appropriate social distancing while waiting in line and follow the directives of the court clerks.

C. Within the Courtrooms:

Circuit courtrooms will exercise appropriate social distancing within the courtrooms. In the event appropriate distancing cannot be maintained PPE such as approved masks will be required within the courtrooms.

Seating in courtrooms will be marked with places to sit that are six feet apart. Public access will be limited to courtroom capacity, not to exceed 25 total individuals in the courtroom, or such number as stated in the Statewide Public Health Order #2: Forbidding Gatherings as it may be amended from time to time. Judges will be responsible for ensuring social distancing or PPE within the courtrooms and may adjust number of persons in the courtrooms to less than 25 to maintain appropriate social distancing. Public, media, and all non-essential persons to a court hearing shall have access to public proceedings through video conferencing with arrangements being made in advance. Courthouse Security will assist with ensuring social distancing and/or PPE within the courtrooms.

Hand sanitizer will be available in courtrooms and Clerk of Circuit Court's offices.

Attorneys and parties will be required to maintain proper social distance at counsel tables. Counsel tables, the podium, etc. may be rearranged to ensure social distancing and standards of courtroom decorum (standing or remaining seated, standing at the lectern) may be modified as each courtroom requires.

3. Hygiene

(e.g. hand sanitizer and Kleenex dispersed throughout courthouse, handwashing flyers posted near all faucets, hand soap readily available near all faucets, sneezing and coughing etiquette flyers posted throughout courthouse)

Each courtroom will have a hand sanitizer dispenser at counsel tables, if available. Courtrooms will have sanitizing wipes available at the clerks' station within the courtroom. Hand sanitizer will also be available at security entrance and the Clerk of Circuit Court's office(s).

Courtrooms will be cleaned at the start of the day. If possible they will also be cleaned between hearings or more frequently at the request of the Circuit Judge if needed..

4. Screening

(e.g. Flyers posted outside courthouse directing individuals with Covid-19 symptoms not to enter, temperature checks of all individuals entering courthouse)

Notices will be posted that persons experiencing flu-like or known COVID-19 symptoms, have a fever, or are coughing or sneezing, may not enter the courthouse and must contact the Court and make arrangements to appear by video or teleconference as allowed by law, or contact the Clerk of Circuit Court if the individual is attempting to reach the Clerk's office.

Court security or other employees as designated by the Sweetwater County Sheriff's Office will perform screening of all individuals entering through security.

All individuals entering through security shall be screened for COVID-19 symptoms.

There will be no waiting in line for security screening inside. Individuals will be allowed to enter the security screening area one at a time, except families will be allowed to be screened together.

Social distancing shall be required while waiting to enter the courthouse. Visual reminders will be placed to remind people of social distancing including on courthouse lobby benches and office entrances.

The following screening questions shall be asked:

- i. Are you experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, muscle or body aches, headaches, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, runny nose, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea?
- ii. Have you tested positive for, or have you been in close contact with someone confirmed, presumed, quarantined, or who is being evaluated for COVID-19?
- iii. Have you recently visited an area that is subject to quarantine because of COVID-19 infection?

Persons who answer “yes” to any of the above questions will be denied courthouse access.

Persons who exhibit symptoms of illness potentially indicating COVID-19 infection will be denied courthouse access.

Court Security Deputies have the authority to deny access to persons who otherwise reasonably appear to present a health risk or fail or refuse to follow the directives for the safety measures set forth herein.

Those denied access will be provided information regarding the appropriate individual or entity to contact. If known, court security will notify the appropriate court if those denied access have a scheduled court appearance.

Court Security Deputies will set a protocol for the use of personal protective equipment while screening.

If a touchless/infrared thermometer is available, when individuals attempt to enter the court building, Court Security Deputies or other employees as designated by the Sweetwater County Sheriff's Office 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.

Inmates being transported from the jail to the court building will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and have their temperature taken prior to transport. Inmates with symptoms or a temperature equal to or above 99.6°F will not be transported to the court building.

Each person entering the courthouse must fill out a questionnaire for screening and contact tracing purposes to gain entrance to the courthouse.

5. Vulnerable Populations

(e.g. allow remote appearances by attorneys and litigants who fall into at-risk categories whenever possible, if at-risk individuals must attend in-person proceedings the court should make every effort to schedule such appearances at times when there are few other individuals in the courthouse)

Notices will be posted and provided with orders setting hearings and docket notices that individuals who are of a higher risk, such as over age 65, individuals with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those with compromised immune systems, such as those undergoing chemotherapy should contact the court to identify themselves as vulnerable and receive accommodations. Please call the Clerks of the Circuit Court at 307-922-5220.

6. Face Coverings

(e.g. supplying court staff with face coverings, requiring face coverings in all public areas of the courthouse)

Because COVID-19 may be spread by persons who are asymptomatic or who have not yet become symptomatic, face coverings shall be required for all persons who enter the courthouse, including staff, elected officials, and court security. Unlike private businesses, litigants and other parties at the courthouse may not be present by choice, i.e. they are unable to choose not to enter. Face coverings are therefore appropriate to safeguard the health and safety of the general public. This requirement is consistent with the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the requirements of the Wyoming Supreme Court, and other courts around the country.

Notices will be posted at the entry of the courthouse that persons are required to wear face coverings for entry and at all times while in the courthouse, unless given an exception by the Court.

- a. A fabric face covering is appropriate. A surgical mask or N95 is not required.
- b. If a member of the public does not have a face covering, one will be provided for them upon request at security.
- c. Court staff and members of other agencies who enter the building other than through the public entrance do not have to wear a face covering upon entry.
- d. Court staff shall wear face coverings when in common or public spaces, such as service counters and courtrooms; when social distancing is not possible; and in accordance with their office's respective policies.

When using a cloth face covering, make sure:

1. The mouth and nose are fully covered.
2. The covering fits snugly against the sides of the face so there are no gaps.
3. You do not have any difficulty breathing while wearing the cloth face covering.
4. The cloth face covering can be tied or otherwise secured to prevent slipping.

5. Keep the covering on your face the entire time you are in public.
6. Don't put the covering around your neck or up on your forehead.

Persons refusing to wear face coverings (or other acceptable PPE) may be denied entrance to the building. If appearing for a hearing or to make payments they may have such dates rescheduled and will be encouraged and advised as to methods of remote appearance or payment. If you believe you have a medical excuse for not wearing face coverings you should contact the clerk of court in advance to make appropriate arrangements. Please call the Clerks of the Circuit Court at 307-922-5220.

7. Cleaning:

(e.g. creating a schedule of regular cleaning of courtrooms, bathrooms, and other public areas; send court staff regular reminders to sanitize commonly touched surfaces such as keyboards, phones, and door handles)

County facilities and maintenance staff will clean courtrooms at the start of the day. They may be asked to clean between or after hearings at the request of a Circuit Judge.

County facilities and maintenance staff will clean common areas (hallways, lobbies, bathrooms).

Public bathrooms shall remain stocked with soap. Hand sanitizer stations shall be near the exterior of public bathrooms so users may sanitize hands after touching doors. There are no public water fountains within this facility.

Court Security Deputies will set a sanitizing schedule for the security equipment and frequently touched surfaces within the security area. This may be done in cooperation with county facilities staff.

8. Other (if applicable):

(consider and address other circumstances unique to your courthouse and community if necessary)

Current protocols for contactless payments and filing, including filing by electronic means, and for public and media access by video conferencing, as stated in the First Amended General Order Concerning Case Requirements During COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020 and the Wyoming Supreme Court's Order Adopting Temporary Plan to Address Health Risks Posed by the COVID-19 Pandemic, as amended from time to time, will remain in place. Members of the public will be encouraged to conduct business and attend hearings without visiting the courthouse in person, if possible and should contact the appropriate office for information and protocols.

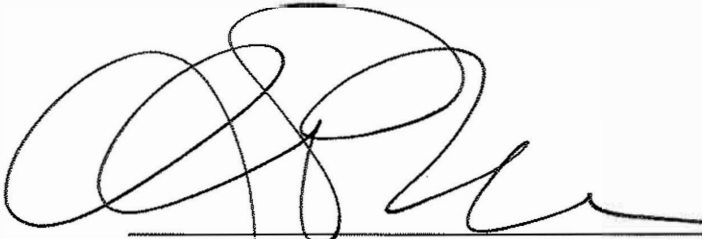
Signatures:

Every judge (or a representative if multiple judges) regularly conducting business in the courthouse must approve and sign the courthouse operating plan, as well the city or county health official.

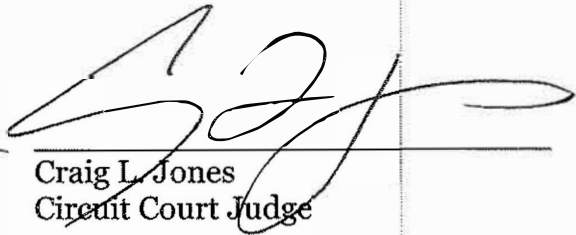
Dated this 28 day of July, 2020.

By the Court

By the Court



John R. Prokos
Circuit Court Judge



Craig L. Jones
Circuit Court Judge

Approved:



Sweetwater County Health Official
Jean Stachon MD