

## **Covid-19 Operations Fact Sheet**

### **Remote Proceedings Will Continue**

1. Video and telephone hearings will continue to be the primary and default method of conducting hearings. These hearings can generally be set much more quickly than in-person hearings. In-person proceedings are currently reserved for emergencies, unusual circumstances, and certain criminal and juvenile matters. If you would like an in-person hearing, you may request one. However, the Court encourages you to review the in-person protocols and evaluate whether your case may be suitable for remote presentation. Both the remote and in-person protocols orders are now posted on the Wyoming Supreme Court website on its Covid resources page. If your matter is set for a remote evidentiary hearing, a protocols order is issued that details how to present exhibits, free training opportunities, and other matters.

### **In-Person Hearings**

2. If your matter is set for an in-person hearing, you will receive an order setting out the in-person protocols. Some of those protocols include physical distancing. Face coverings are required at all times, including while speaking, with limited exceptions for witnesses and otherwise considered on an ad hoc basis. All exhibits must be pre-filed. No paper will be passed around during the hearing. The podium and Elmo will not be used. Counsel may present exhibits through the Hub from counsel table.

### **Media, Public, and Family Attendance**

3. All hearings during the pandemic remain open to the public and the press through remote means. This Court's Public and Media Access Plan is posted on the Supreme Court's website. The Court's weekly schedule is posted on the Clerk of District Court's Website. Any family member, friend, member of the press, member of the public, law students, Victim Services staff, support staff, or inquisitive attorneys may attend in-person or remote hearings by video conference or telephone by contacting the Judicial Assistant for the video link or conference line. Hearings that are closed as a matter of law whether in-person or not, such as juvenile matters, remain closed.

### **Electronic Filing**

4. The Clerk of District Court's Office continues to encourage the use of fax filing and e-mail filing. A drop-box in the courthouse lobby may be provided for your convenience. Please contact the Clerk of District Court's office for the most current instructions.

### **Video Hearings**

5. The Court continues to offer free training opportunities for counsel in advance of the video hearings, for instruction or practice on how to connect, how to troubleshoot connectivity issues, and for practicing how to present exhibits during your hearing.

### **Litigants without Remote Devices or Internet Access**

6. For those criminal defendants and indigent litigants without access to internet, cellular data, or any electronic devices for remote hearings, the Court installed a free Wifi hotspot adjacent to the courthouse. The Court has a tablet and a phone that litigants may borrow for hearings. The

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devices are sanitized before and after use. Counsel should contact the Court's Judicial Assistant in advance of any hearing if a device will be needed so appropriate arrangements can be made.

### **Jury Trials**

7. The Court released its jury trial plan in mid-October and that plan is posted on the Supreme Court website. By order of the Supreme Court, jury trials remain deferred at this time with limited exceptions. Due to constitutional considerations, criminal trials are likely to be set before civil trials. The Court is currently determining its available civil jury trial dates. If you are awaiting a civil trial date, you can anticipate a status conference in December, which may be preceded by a notice of the available trial dates for your matter.

This Court is amenable to conducting a remote civil jury trial and is amenable to remote jury selection in any case. Courts in Washington State have been conducting jury selection remotely (a hybrid proceeding) since August 2020. Courts in Florida, Arizona, Texas, and Michigan have conducted fully remote civil jury trials. If you are interested in a remote or hybrid proceeding, please file a notice or request a status conference.

### **Court Staff and Court Reporter Requests**

8. Court staff is working both in the office and remotely, and in-person staffing is subject to change. However, during business hours, someone does answer the phone when you call our office. If the Court Reporter is needed to report a civil hearing, a courtesy copy of the three-day notice should be sent to the Court Reporter by email at [loviatt@courts.state.wy.us](mailto:loviatt@courts.state.wy.us).

The Court is aware that different courts around the state have different protocols. Those differences are informed in part by the physical limitations of the different buildings, such as ventilation limits; physical capacity; local levels of Covid-19 cases; local public health recommendations and orders; mores of the community; and predilections of the judges.

Further information about this Court's protocols can be found at the Clerk of District Court's website and the Wyoming Supreme Court's website. The Wyoming Supreme Court website includes drop-down menus for the COVID-19 protocols and related orders in each of Wyoming's district courts.