

# Covid-19 Operating Plan For Jury Trials

Judicial District: Seventh Judicial District

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Courthouse: Townsend Justice Center

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Address: 115 North Center Street, Casper, WY 82601

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Judges: Judge Brown, Patchen, Christensen

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Proposed Start Date of Jury  
Trials:

*June 2021*

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## **Pre-Courthouse Screening**

*Courts should take efforts to ensure that vulnerable populations are not compelled to come to the courthouse and to educate potential jurors on the precautions each courtroom is taking to protect jurors' health and safety.*

**Health (Screening)** The Court will conduct health screenings when jurors arrive at the courthouse. The screening will consist of:

Court screening personnel will take and record the temperature of all potential jurors before entering the courtroom.

Court personnel will provide a COVID-19 screening information sheet.

If a potential juror answers affirmative to any health screening question, the potential juror will not be admitted to the courtroom and will be asked to return to their vehicle and await further instructions from the Court.

The Court will remind jury panel members to notify the bailiff or the Court of any changes in their health condition.

## **Hygiene/Personal Protective Equipment (Screening)**

Court screening personnel will provide each jury panel member with a court provided face covering (mask or face screen) and gloves (if requested.)

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## ***Social Distancing Within the Courtroom***

Once in the courtroom, the court will ensure social distancing is practiced.

***Safety Precaution Information:*** The Court will post information on the county and supreme court websites and throughout the courthouse detailing the precautions taken by the Court.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), health screenings, and changes in facilities and operations can all help protect potential jurors and minimize the risk of exposure while at the courthouse. There are things within the courthouse/rooms that courts may need to adjust to help the facility protect jurors' health and safety.

## **□ VOIR DIRE**

***Voir dire poses special problems due to the number of people that will be congregating at the courthouse. In addition, voir dire is the first-time potential jurors will interact with court personnel so neither group may know what to expect.***

***Social Distancing*** – The gallery of the courtroom will be set up to allow persons in the courtroom to socially distance.

The Court may seat the Jury in the gallery maintaining social distancing and put plastic coverings on any microphones used by multiple individuals (i.e. witness and podium microphones). The plastic coverings will be changed periodically.

## ***Hygiene/Personal Protective Equipment in the Courtroom***

Potential jurors are encouraged to wear masks if not vaccinated while entering and leaving the courtroom.

Each courtroom contains hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes.

## ***Private Voir Dire***

Any panel member that requests to have a private voir dire will have their name recorded. After the panel of jury selection is completed, the Court will call jurors who request private voir dire back into the courtroom or in a separate room, one at a time to be examined by the parties.

Bailiffs may return all jury panel members to the assigned area after examination by the parties.

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## ***Calling the Jury***

After jury selection, the Court will notify the remainder of the jury panel members that they are free to go about their business as they have not been selected to serve on this jury.

## ***Seating the Jury***

Once the Court has completed the jury selection process, the Court must determine how to safely seat the jury during trial. The Jurors will be socially distanced and are encouraged to wear a mask or face shield throughout the trial. Each juror will have an assigned seat for the duration of the trial.

Jurors will be provided a clipboard with paper or a notebook for notetaking throughout the trial. The jurors will keep their clipboards or notebooks with them throughout the trial or may leave them in the jury room to ensure that no one has access to the juror's materials.

## ***Recesses***

If the jury room is not large enough to accommodate social distancing, the Court will utilize two jury rooms connected by a surface hub in each room for three (3) jurors to be able to deliberate with the other three (3) jurors in real time. This will allow all six (6) jurors to deliberate with each other in a socially distanced manner without access by anyone else. The Court will ensure that jury deliberations are not recorded.

## ***Conducting the Trial.***

### ***Hygiene***

The Court will ensure that the courtroom is cleaned and disinfected with an EPA approved disinfectant following morning and afternoon session.

### ***Exhibits & Documents***

Although there is not much evidence supporting surface transmission of COVID-19. Still, the Court will use the following procedures for admitting and publishing documents and physical evidence.

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 join onto the display screens in the courtroom.

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## **Sidebars**

If an attorney wishes to have a sidebar conversation, the attorneys will if possible, utilize recently installed white noise to allow the attorneys to remain at their assigned tables and speak without the jury being able to hear the conversation. Otherwise, the attorneys will approach the bench, and maintain social distancing if possible.

## **Jury Deliberation**

During jury deliberation, the jury will be instructed that they will be responsible for enforcing the Court's social distancing rules themselves. If any Juror has concerns about any of the jurors not following instructions, they may report those concerns to the Judge.

## **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.*

X

Circuit Court Judge

JUN 23 2021

Date

X

Circuit Court Judge

Date

X

Circuit Court Judge

Date

23 June 2021

6/23/2021