

Covid-19 Operating Plan

Judicial District: First Judicial District

Courthouse: Laramie County Circuit Court

Address: 309 W 20th Street

Judges: Sean Chambers

Antoinette Williams

Thomas Lee

** All judges in the courthouse should coordinate the timing of jury trials to minimize the number of jurors in the courthouse at one time; however, district and circuit courts may develop separate operating plans.*

Proposed Start Date of Jury Trials: June 1, 2021

Please identify measures your courthouse is implementing in each of the following categories:
(Please refer to the Covid-19 Jury Trial Guidelines for guidance)

- Pre-Courthouse Screening
(e.g. supplemental juror questionnaires screening for high-risk individuals, providing safety precaution information, increasing number of jurors summoned for each venire panel to allow for more excusals)

An Optional Supplemental Juror Questionnaire will be provided to each juror, allowing each juror to indicate whether they are in a risk category and whether they are willing to serve as a juror in light of COVID-19 pandemic.
Potential jurors called for any matter, will be informed that the current CDC guidelines require masks to be worn if an individual has not been vaccinated. Masks will be optional for those individuals who have been vaccinated.
The Court will increase the number of jurors called to 25, allowing for more excusals in each individual panel.

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Courthouse Protections

(e.g. operating and inspecting ventilation systems, leaving doors open where possible)

The Courtrooms will be cleaned twice daily. Hand sanitizer is available upon check-in and at each counsel table.

Jurors will be required to check in with the Clerk of Court prior to entry in the Courtroom. Jurors will be asked to self-report whether they have experienced certain symptoms associated with COVID-19.



Voir Dire

(e.g. health screenings on arrival, possible use of larger facilities, staggered arrival times, disinfect courtroom between panels, spaced seating, plexiglass barriers, remote voir dire, providing PPE)

Voir Dire of jury panels will be conducted using Courtrooms A & B of the Circuit Court. Panels will consist of 25 potential jurors. 15 jurors will be placed in Courtroom A, and 10 jurors (with a bailiff) in Courtroom B. Using existing technology, participants in the two courtrooms will be able to see and hear one another. Each potential juror will have an assigned seat, socially distanced, and will be required to sit in their assigned seat. Attorneys and their clients will be in Courtroom A. Masks and/or face shields will be provided to each potential juror, and wearing of a mask or face shield will be optional.

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Seating the Jury

(e.g. PPE, implement social distance between jurors while maintaining ability to see and hear, plexiglass barriers, alternative areas for juror recesses/deliberations)

After a jury is selected, the trial will commence using Circuit Courtroom A. Jurors selected will be assigned a seat and will be required to sit in their assigned seat. The seated jurors will be socially distanced from one another and from other participants.

Wearing of masks by jurors will be optional.

Conducting the Trial

(e.g. allow public access via webcast/livestreaming, create separate areas for jurors and public, eliminate podiums, allow attorneys and clients to communicate via electronic devices, limit use of communal microphones and disinfect after use, limit juror contact with exhibits until deliberations)

The Circuit Court has the capability to livestream proceedings and will, if requested, livestream trial proceedings.

Members of the public will be allowed in the courtroom during the trial, however seating will be limited to conform with social distancing requirements. Members of the public who are not allowed into the courtroom due to seating restrictions will be allowed to view proceedings by livestreaming. Attorneys will be allowed to conduct examinations of witnesses from counsel table and will not be allowed to use the podium.

Attorneys will be allowed to use the podium to conduct voir dire, opening and closing arguments. Attorneys using the podium will be required to wipe down the podium and microphone after they have completed their statements.

Attorneys from the same office will be allowed to sit with their clients at counsel table. Attorneys and clients will be encouraged to wear masks while in the courtroom.

During the trial, the attorneys and witnesses, if properly socially distanced, may remove their masks while talking.

Technology will be used whenever possible to publish exhibits to the jury to prevent handling of exhibits.

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- Infection Event Protocol**
(e.g. notify public health officials)

If there is an infection event, the Laramie County Health Office will be notified.

- Other (if applicable):**
(consider and address other circumstances unique to your courthouse and community if necessary)

Jurors will be allowed to deliberate either in Courtroom C or in the jury deliberation room for Courtroom D. Either room will allow jurors to maintain social distance during deliberations. Jury Instructions and jury notebooks will be provided to jurors, handled only by individuals following proper protocols. The bailiff will wipe off juror notebooks after collecting them, before returning the notebooks to the jurors. Bottled water will be provided to jurors. All food items provided to jurors will be individually wrapped.

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Signatures:

The operating plan should be approved by every judge regularly conducting business in the court subject to the plan. A representative judge must sign the operating plan, along with the city or county health official.

x adriana williams
Judge

5/25/21
Date

[Signature]
Judge

5/25/21
Date

[Signature]
Judge

5-25-21
Date

x [Signature]
City or County Health Official

5/26/21
Date

