COVID-19 Circuit Court Operating Plan for Rusk County

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the buildings housing the courts, the courts of **Rusk** County will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. Planning for reopening Rusk County Circuit Court began in early May. Judge Steven P. Anderson and Clerk of Court Lori Gorsegner have met on an almost daily basis working on ideas and strategies to safely resume in person appearances. Judge Anderson and Clerk Gorsegner consulted with the Rusk County Public Health Officer, Emergency Management Director Thomas Hall and County Administrator Andy Albarado on several occasions regarding safe practices for staff and visitors to the Government Center. Judge Anderson and Clerk Gorsegner personally consulted with the Sheriff, District Attorney, Public Defender, court commissioner, and County Administrator. The planning culminated in a Zoom meeting on June 4, 2020, with the following justice partners to discuss and consider the recommendations outlined in the Wisconsin COVID- 19 Task Force report:
   Judge Steven P. Anderson
   Clerk of Court Lori Gorsegner
   Court Commissioner Terry Nussberger
   Sheriff Jeffrey Wallace
   District Attorney Annette Barna
   Assistant District Attorney Les Liptak
   County Administrator Andy Albarado
   Public Defender Supervisor Ryan Raymond
   DOC Supervisor Stephannie Schmidt
   District Court Administrator Christopher Channing
2. The judge will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. Before calendaring in-person hearings, the court will have adequate staff and will have procured personal protective equipment and sanitation supplies necessary.
4. The Court will continue to maintain communication with the Rusk County Public Health Officer and Rusk County Office of Emergency Management and will adjust this operating plan as necessary with any changes in the public health conditions in the county.
5. The Judge may begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than July 1, 2020

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judges and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will do so, whenever necessary.
2. The Judges and Court Staff will follow Rusk County Public Health guidelines.
3. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings in the courtrooms, jury rooms and confined court-related spaces. They will practice social distancing and appropriate hand hygiene as recommended by the CDC.

4. Protective Measures: hand sanitizer and face coverings are provided and cleaning of courtroom and clerk of court's office is completed several times throughout the day.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: The judge will continue to use zoom and telephone hearings as much as possible.

Vulnerable Populations

1. Individuals who are over age 65 and individuals with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy are considered to be vulnerable populations.
2. Each judge will include information on orders setting hearings, dockets notices, and in other communications notifying individuals who are in vulnerable populations of the ability to contact the court to identify themselves as a vulnerable individual and receive accommodations.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by using zoom video or telephone.

Social Distancing

1. All persons not from the same household who are permitted in the court building will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet.
2. No more than two individuals not from the same household will be permitted in an elevator. If more than one individual from the same household is in an elevator, no other individuals will be permitted in the elevator.
3. The third floor of the Government Center and court system has no breakrooms and snack rooms.

Gallery

4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom has been determined and posted at 12. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
5. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating.

Well

6. In each courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk, court reporter, and bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building, inside of each courtroom, and inside of bathrooms.
2. Notices regarding the availability of hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes/spray will be posted at the entrance of each courtroom and court-related confined space.
3. Disinfectant wipes or spray have been placed at counsel tables, at the witness stand, at the jury box, and on the judge's bench.
4. CDC flyers outlining appropriate hygiene, social distancing, or public safety have been posted in multiple locations on each floor of the court building.

Screening

1. Rusk County has no security screening at the main entrance. However, for jury trials health screening will be performed at the main (east) entrance as set forth in the Jury Trial Plan and social distancing and face covering requirements will be enforced by Court Security.

Face Coverings

1. All members of the public entering the Rusk County Government Center are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings at all times.
2. All persons present in the Courtrooms, jury rooms and court-related confined spaces **shall** wear face coverings. A witness will be required to wear a mask until they sit in the witness stand. The witness stand is surrounded in Plexiglas so when testifying the witness may remove his/her mask. After the witness is released from the witness stand they shall put their face covering back on until they leave the courtroom. Notices regarding this requirement will be posted at the entrance of each courtroom, jury room and court-related confined space and will state that this requirement will be enforced by the judge.
3. Individuals may bring face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided by court staff.
4. Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for a judicial proceeding will be provided face coverings and required to wear them while in the court.

Cleaning

1. Rusk County cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every day and will be disinfected by mist.
2. Rusk County cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms-at the end of each day the courtroom is used and will be disinfected by mist.
3. Rusk County continuously runs the HVAC system.
4. Rusk County cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.

5. Rusk County cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.
6. Cleaning wipes or cleaning spray and paper towels will be provided at counsel tables and anyone using the table will need to clean before and after each use.

Date: 6/5/2020

Hon. Steven P. Anderson, Judge

Date: 6/5/2020

Hon. Maureen D. Boyle, Chief Judge

COVID-19 Circuit Court Operating Plan for Rusk County Addendum: Jury Trial Plan

As an addendum to the Operating Plan filed with the Chief Judge of the Judicial District on June 5, 2020 , this plan is developed to ensure the health and safety of jurors, litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals participating in jury trials. The courts of Rusk County will implement the following additional protective measures related to jury trials:

Recovery Planning and General Education

1. Planning for reopening Rusk County Circuit Court began in early May. Judge Steven P. Anderson and Clerk of Court Lori Gorsegner met on an almost daily basis working on ideas and strategies to safely resume in person appearances. They also began ordering facemasks and sanitary supplies in late May and early June so that they were available for a July 1, 2020 start date. Judge Anderson and Clerk Gorsegner consulted with the Public Health, Emergency Management Director and County Administer on several occasions regarding safe practices for staff and visitors to the Government Center. Judge Anderson personally consulted with the Court Commissioner, Sheriff, District Attorney, Public Defender, and Administrative Coordinator. This planning culminated in a Zoom meeting on June 4, 2020, with the following justice partners:

   Judge Steven P. Anderson
   Clerk of Court Lori Gorsegner
   Court Commissioner Terry Nussberger
   Sheriff Jeffery Wallace
   District Attorney Annette Barna
   Assistant District Attorney Les Liptak
   County Administrator Andy Albardo
   Public Defender Supervisor Ryan Raymond
   DOC Supervisor Stephannie Schmidt
   District Court Administrator Chris Channing

2. The following efforts have been undertaken to educate the general public on the importance of jury service and the specific precautions taken in the county with respect to public safety and ensuring the safety of jurors during the pandemic: Notice sent to Jurors outlining safety procedures; there will be a news release about the plan and it will be posted on the Rusk County website; no group jury orientation; Individual pads and pens for jurors to keep; no communal food or drink; lunches and snacks delivered in individual containers; using two courtrooms and the county board room by Zoom to do jury selection; using jury box and gallery during trial to social distance jurors; using large courtroom to do jury deliberations as there is a bathroom near and allows for social distancing. The jurors have an assigned seats to prevent contamination. Jurors will be taken outside by bailiffs for breaks.

Summoning Jurors

1. Considerations have been made for the safety and wellbeing of jurors. The attached letters were developed and will be sent with the juror summons to each juror.
2. The Clerk of Court and judge are using liberal deferral and excusal of jurors.
3. The following protective measures, including expedited entrance into the courthouse, check-in that minimizes physical contact with documents, posting notice regarding hygiene and distancing practices, are in place for jurors who report to court: court personnel will call jurors who are waiting in their vehicles in the parking lot when it is their time to sign in. An Emergency Medical Technician will conduct health screening questions and temperature check. Individuals who indicate yes to any of the health questions or have a temperature above 100.4 degrees F will be refused admittance to the Government Center. No record will be kept of the health screening or temperature checks. The screening process will occur outside in the parking lot on the east side of the Government Center.

Juror Attendance and Safe Participation

1. Personal protective equipment will be available to the jurors, including masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer.
2. Social distancing of jurors will be enforced through the following strategies: limiting the capacity in the courtroom, marking off spaces 6 ft. apart within the courtroom and jury box, reconfiguring placement of counsel tables, court reporter, witness stand, and/or bench, using an alternate courtroom for additional capacity, installing Plexiglas shields for witness stand.
3. The following strategies will be used to reduce the number of people required to report for jury selection: Utilize preselection questionnaires, conduct voir dire in sessions based on the capacity of the court room that will allow appropriate social distancing, broadcast jury selection and limit or eliminate spectators in the courtroom, utilize 6-person juries upon stipulation.
4. After the jury has been empaneled, the following efforts have been made to accommodate social distancing, but ensure that each juror has adequate sight lines to the witness stand and can hear and see all proceedings. Examples of such accommodations include: use of technology and video monitors to increase site lines, and handling of exhibits. Documented efforts: portable document cameras (Elmos) will be used at each counsel table for all exhibits pre-marked by the attorneys, which will then be displayed on the large screen facing the jury and the litigants. Hard copy exhibits can be filed with the Clerk of Court office for electronic filing.
5. Social distancing consideration during trial breaks and deliberations include reconfiguration of the deliberation room, using an alternate room for deliberations, hand sanitizing and bathroom capacity, availability of refreshments: Rusk County will use the large courtroom which can accommodate the jurors for deliberations. We will allow the jurors to eat lunch in the gallery of the main courtroom and in the jury room where there are bathrooms. We will split the jury for breaks

during the trial to accommodate social distancing. Individual lunches and snacks will be ordered and distributed, only bottled water and pop will be provided.

6. The court will attempt to prioritize jury trials during the COVID 19 public health emergency and as usual will take into consideration the nature of the cases, the extent to which the cases involve liberty interests, cases with time limitations, victim's rights and input, and the length of time a case has been pending.
7. Rusk County can only accommodate one jury trial per day, so there is no need to enter order in regard to scheduling.
8. Due to capacity issues within the courtroom, the following accommodations will be given for public view of the proceedings: if members of the public cannot be accommodated due to the number of those attending, the court will use courtroom two with sound and sight to stream and also the County Board Room if necessary.

Date: 6/5/2020

Hon. Steven P. Anderson, Presiding Judge

Date: 6/5/2020

Hon. Maureen D. Boyle, Chief Judge

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We care about juror safety!

Safety measures have been implemented to keep you safe during your jury service.

- Masks or face coverings are required to be worn by everyone entering the Government Center for this trial. Please bring your own mask or face covering with you. If you don't have one, we will provide you with one. You will also be provided with your own pen and gloves to wear if you wish.
- Courtrooms and public spaces are regularly disinfected.
- We have modified our usual procedures for jury selection and service so that social distancing is enforced. Jurors will be spaced apart throughout the courtrooms and county board room.
- Beverages are NOT allowed in the courtrooms and a communal coffee pot will NOT be available. Bottled water and soda WILL be provided.
- If you haven't signed up for text or email notifications, please do so now by calling (715) 532-2108. Due to the pandemic there will be NO jury orientation.
- **PLEASE REPORT TO THE MAIN ENTRANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT CENTER (East door). An EMT will be at the door to ask a few basic health questions and to take your temperature. The Clerk will be there to sign you in and direct you to the appropriate area.**

Lori Gorsegner
Rusk County Clerk of Circuit Court
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311 Miner Avenue East, Suite L350, Ladysmith, WI 54848
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Linda Prince
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Criminal/Small Claims
715-532-2207

Brooke Clark
Deputy Clerk
Family/Civil
715-532-2111

Karie Kennedy
Chief Deputy Clerk
715-532-2150

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Due to Covid 19 safety measures, please **remain in your vehicle** upon arrival for jury duty on June 8, 2020, at 8:00 a.m. You will be called by the Clerk of Circuit Court's office and directed when it is your turn to enter the building and sign in. Please be patient as this may take some time to check in all jurors.

Please be sure to have a current cell phone number on file with the Clerk of Circuit Court's office. If you do not have a cell phone, you may report to the east door of the Government Center. A clerk will be there to greet you.

Thank you for your patience and understanding during this time.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

SOCIAL DISTANCING IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE CORONAVIRUS SPREADS WHEN AN INFECTED PERSON COUGHS SMALL DROPLETS - PACKED WITH THE VIRUS - INTO THE AIR. THESE CAN BE BREATHED IN, OR CAN CAUSE AN INFECTION IF YOU TOUCH A SURFACE THEY HAVE LANDED ON, AND THEN TOUCH YOUR FACE WITH UNWASHED HANDS

WASH YOUR HANDS

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Karie Kennedy
Chief Deputy Clerk
715-532-2150

Rhonda Kelley
Deputy Clerk
715-532-2108

May 4, 2020

Dear Juror,

The Court wants to thank you for your jury service. We want you to know that the health and well being of our jurors and community is very important to us.

Due to the recent Court Orders regarding Corornavirus (Covid-19), the Court will enforce social distancing. The Court will provide face masks, pens, paper, gloves, and disinfecting wipes. The courtroom and jury room will also be disinfected each morning and evening.

Sincerely,

Lori Gorsegner
Clerk of Circuit Court