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STATE OF WISCONSIN

SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT

RACINE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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RACINE, WISCONSIN 53403



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 16, 2020

RACINE COUNTY COURTS TO RESUME IN PERSON PROCEEDINGS (PHASE I)

Racine, Wisconsin. Effective June 17, 2020 Racine County courts will resume in person proceedings in a limited capacity subject to practices and procedures outlined in a Safety Plan created by the judiciary and county stakeholders. Such practices will include that face coverings be worn by all individuals in the courtroom, including the judge and staff. Judges will continue to schedule and conduct court proceedings remotely but may now conduct in person hearings at their discretion based on constitutional and statutory requirements and other considerations. In person proceedings including jury trials have been suspended by Supreme Court order since March 22, 2020. Jury trials will remain suspended until further notice. The resumption of in person proceedings will be a four phase approach from limited in person hearings to jury trials and ultimately to all proceedings without restriction. Litigants and their attorneys are instructed to pay close attention to their notice of hearing as it will include important information as to where and how their hearing will be conducted.

In considering 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 judiciary established a committee of multidisciplinary county stakeholders to develop a safety plan for opening the courts for in person proceedings in accordance with the Wisconsin Supreme Court's COVID-19 Task Force report and Supreme Court order dated May 22, 2020. The plan was developed with the intent to be proactive, recognizing the need to provide all constitutional and statutory protections to the litigants and interested parties, as well as the public's right to access. The attached COVID-19 Circuit Court Safety Plan for Racine County and Order is effective June 17, 2020 as Racine County begins Phase 1. Highlights of the plan include:

- The health of judges and court staff will be monitored daily with use of Center for Disease Control (CDC) health screening guidelines.
- Individuals entering court buildings will be subject to screening per CDC health screening guidelines. Anyone exhibiting any symptom outlined in the screening will be required to immediately exit the building.
- Judges will use their best efforts to continue to schedule and conduct court proceedings remotely as may be possible via video conferencing or telephone. Judges will only schedule in person proceedings as determined by the Judge based on constitutional and

statutory requirements, the nature of the proceeding and requests of attorneys and litigants. Notice of Hearings will be sent to litigants and their attorneys accordingly.

- Judges, court staff and all individuals in the courtroom will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing and practice appropriate hygiene requirements while in the courtrooms.
- Individuals coming to court are strongly encouraged to bring their own face covering with them. Individuals required to appear in court who fail to bring a face covering will be provided one by the Court while supplies last.
- Vulnerable populations will be given special accommodations and should contact the court to request such appropriate accommodations.
- Signage will be posted in strategic locations outlining requirements such as:
 - Not entering building with any of the following (per CDC guidelines): Fever of 100.4 degrees F or higher, shortness of breath, cough, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or
 - Wearing face coverings
 - Observing 6 foot social distancing in hallways and courtrooms
 - Utilizing sanitation stations
- Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at strategic locations throughout the court buildings.
- Hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, disinfectant spray and paper towels will be placed in a “sanitation station” set up in the courtroom.
- Counsel tables will be cleaned after each hearing and courtrooms deep cleaned daily.
- Plexiglass barriers have been installed where 6 foot social distancing can not be met.

The committee will meet regularly as it monitors the ongoing health situation and it will make any necessary adjustments to the plan and/or phase based upon the same. For further information, please contact the Racine County Clerk of Courts office at 262-633-3333 or via email at rcclerkofcourts@racinecounty.com.