



## **HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS FOR COURTHOUSES IN THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

Effective May 27, 2021

The health and safety of everyone who comes to our courthouses – employees, lawyers, litigants, jurors, contractors, law enforcement personnel, the press, and interested members of the public – is our first priority. After considering guidance from an expert epidemiologist retained by the Court, as well as leading health organizations, including the Centers for Disease Control and New York State, New York City and Long Island public health agencies, the Eastern District of New York adopts the following health and safety protocols for everyone’s protection. These protocols will remain in effect as long as public health guidance requires them. The Court may modify these protocols as necessary.

### **Before You Come to the Courthouses of the Eastern District of New York:**

We need your help in the fight against the COVID-19 virus. **You may not come to the courthouse if you are not feeling well, or have any symptoms associated with COVID-19, including:**

- cough
- shortness of breath
- fever
- chills
- muscle pain
- headache
- sore throat
- new loss of taste or smell

**In addition, you will not be allowed to enter the courthouse if you fall into any of the following categories:**

- Persons who have been advised to self-quarantine by any doctor, hospital or health agency within the last 14 days;
- Persons who, within the last 14 days, have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or told to presume they have COVID-19 by a health professional;
- Persons who have had close contact with anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or told to presume they have COVID-19 by a health professional, unless the diagnosis was more than 14 days ago and the person diagnosed has been

symptom-free for the past 72 hours;

- Persons who have had, within the past 14 days, cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, or extreme fatigue, unless the symptoms are attributable to another known condition;
- Persons who reside with someone who, within the last 14 days, has had cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, or extreme fatigue, unless the symptoms are attributable to another known condition;
- Persons, except those who are fully vaccinated, who have returned within the past 14 days from international travel, or a cruise ship or river voyage without 7 days of quarantine with a negative COVID-19 test 3-5 days after travel or 10 days of quarantine without a COVID-19 test; and
- Persons who have been released from a federal, state or local jail, prison or other detention facility within the last 14 days, except those who are reporting to be fit with a location monitoring device.

If you are a court employee, you must alert your supervisor that you or someone with whom you live or have had close contact are showing symptoms of COVID -19, or you fall into any of the above categories. You will be instructed on how to participate in the court's Contact Tracing Program if appropriate.

If you are not an employee and are supposed to report to the courthouse for official business – whether you are a lawyer, witness, defendant, litigant, juror, or contractor, or under the supervision of the Office of Pretrial Services or United States Probation Department – you should contact the person who directed you to report if you are not feeling well, are showing symptoms of the virus, or fall into one of the above categories. You can ask to participate in a proceeding remotely, or to adjourn the proceeding or reschedule the meeting.

### **As You Enter the Courthouses of the Eastern District of New York:**

Every person who comes to one of our courthouses, for any reason, must pass through the following screening process:

- 1) Your temperature will be taken, using a contactless thermometer. If your temperature is 100.4 degrees or higher, you will not be permitted to enter the courthouse.
- 2) You will be asked a few screening questions about your COVID-19 status and possible recent COVID-19 exposure. If your answers indicate that you may have COVID-19 or that you recently may have been exposed to COVID-19, you will be asked follow-up questions, so that the screener can determine whether you should be allowed to enter the building.

- 3) You must wear a face covering or mask that covers your nose and mouth and conforms to the standards listed below under “**Face Coverings.**” If you do not have an appropriate face covering or mask, one will be available at the entrance. No one will be admitted without a mask or face covering.
- 4) You are encouraged to use hand sanitizer, which will be available at all courthouse entrances.
- 5) Electronic devices that must be checked upon entering the courthouse must be placed in a single use plastic bag before handing them to the Court Security Officers.
- 6) You must adhere to safe social distancing rules on entering the courthouses, by standing at least six feet away from other individuals. Markings will be placed in the courthouse atrium to guide you. You must obey all instructions of the Court Security Officers.

### **During Your Time in the Courthouse:**

While you are in the courthouse, you must comply with the following rules. If you fail or refuse to abide by these rules, you will be required to leave the courthouse immediately.

**Face Coverings:** You must wear a mask or face covering that covers your nose and mouth in all public and common areas of the courthouse (including hallways, public counters, elevators, public restrooms, and courtrooms), or in areas where more than two persons are working, and any time you are interacting with any other person(s), regardless of social distancing. Anyone who interacts with the public must wear a mask or face covering at all times. **Face coverings must conform to one of the following standards:** a) a KN95/N95 mask; b) a surgical mask; or c) a cloth mask. Face coverings **must not** be wet or dirty, include valves or vents, or consist of single layer fabric that allows light to pass. Bandanas and gaiters are not permitted (see: CDC Guidelines: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/types-of-masks.html>).

**Social Distancing:** You must adhere to safe social distancing rules, by standing or sitting at least six feet away from other individuals.

Courtrooms are being configured in order to provide for proper social distancing by lawyers, litigants, witnesses, jurors, and all others. Markings will be placed in the well of the courtroom, at counsel tables and in the public seating gallery, to indicate where people may stand or sit. There will be fewer seats in public galleries, and overflow courtrooms or public call-in phone numbers will be used when necessary. Jurors will be seated in areas that allow for proper social distancing. Plexiglass dividers may be placed in courtrooms to further protect participants in all proceedings. In addition, plexiglass barriers will be erected in key locations, such as public counters, and frequently visited desks and workstations, to enhance the safety of those transacting business with the Court.

If you are standing in a line, you must keep six feet away from any persons around you, unless you are taking care of a small child or assisting someone with special needs. Elevator capacity will be limited and will be clearly marked with signs. Masks must be worn by all elevator occupants other than children under 2 years old. Markings will be placed on floors in highly trafficked areas, indicating where it is permissible to stand or walk. Where appropriate, markings will also be placed on benches within the courthouse indicating where it is permissible to sit.

Employee workspaces are being reconfigured, and employee work schedules are being adjusted, so that every employee can work in a safe, socially distanced environment.

**Doors:** Whenever possible, doors used by the public will be left ajar, so that no one needs to touch door handles to gain entry. This includes restroom doors.

**Hand Washing and Sanitizing:** Everyone is expected to practice appropriate hygiene, including frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and the use of hand sanitizer. Hand sanitizers will be placed throughout the courthouses, especially in highly trafficked areas like courtroom entrances, employee work areas, and public counters. You should wash or sanitize your hands after touching surfaces like elevator call buttons, door handles, public counters, and workplace equipment. You should also wash or sanitize your hands after using the restroom, sneezing, blowing your nose, eating or drinking, going on break, or interacting with the public. All restrooms will have plenty of soap and paper towels, which will be regularly replenished.

**Instructional Signage:** There will be health and hygiene reminders at all entrances and throughout the courthouses. This signage will remind you about EDNY rules on masks, social distancing, occupancy restrictions, and hand washing.

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**Responsibility for ensuring a safe courthouse environment rests with everyone who comes to our Court. Please help us by following these protocols during your visit.**