

# Washtenaw County Courts Will Not Re-open for In-person Services on Monday, June 8

ANN ARBOR, Michigan, June 5, 2020 — Courts in Washtenaw County are not allowed to re-open for in-person business on June 8 when many other governmental offices will begin doing so.

Courts operate under the direction of the State Court Administrative Office, which has asked courts to implement an incremental approach to re-opening consisting of four phases, depending on data from the health department and local hospitals. Courts must be in each phase for at least 14 days and have the support of the local health department before the State Court Administrative Office will consider approving courts to move to the next, “more open” phase. The first and second phases require that only employees be allowed in the building with very few exceptions. Thus, in-person services will not be available at the Courts until late June or early July. This means that all Court proceedings, probation interviews and any other court services involving the public will be conducted via phone, videoconferencing, mail or other alternative means. Once the courts reach phase 3, more in-person services will be able to take place, but the guidance supports continuing doing filings by mail, email, and MiFile, and still conducting as many virtual hearings as possible.

When the courthouses re-open, new safety protocols will be in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect staff and the public. These protocols will include:

- Encouraging court users to make payments or conduct court business online, through the mail, utilizing the drop boxes at court locations or via other means as much as possible.
- Face coverings in public areas will be required at all times. If a visitor does not have a face covering, some court locations will be able to provide them at the security screening locations.
- Visitors will be screened for symptoms and COVID exposure at the security screening locations.
- Physical distancing of 6 feet or more will be required. Floor markings and stanchions have been installed to direct traffic flow.
- Sneeze guards have been installed at customer service counters, and signage has been placed throughout the building to note safety protocols that should be followed.
- Cleaning and sanitization procedures have also been updated to provide more thorough and frequent cleaning of common areas and equipment.

Re-opening plans for Michigan courts can be found online at:

<https://courts.michigan.gov/Administration/admin/pol/Pages/Directory-of-LAOs-Return-to-Full-Capacity.aspx>