



CIRCUIT COURT FOR BALTIMORE CITY

Office of the Jury Commissioner
100 North Calvert Street, Room 239
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Frequently Asked Questions Related to COVID-19

The Maryland Court of Appeals [Administrative Order Clarifying COVID-19 Health Measures in Courthouses and Judicial Branch Facilities](#) requires that anyone entering a courthouse, including employees, are required to wear a mask or face covering; submit to a written or verbal questionnaire regarding any COVID-19 related symptoms; and submit to a contactless thermometer temperature check. These measures are in place as additional safety precautions to help protect the well-being of all court visitors, judges, and employees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CHAIRS AND TABLES

1. How often are chairs, tables and chair handles wiped down?

Wipes are provided to enable users to wipe chairs and tables as needed. Handles or “touch points” are wiped daily by the cleaning staff.

2. Are there assigned seats in the jury assembly rooms? In the courtroom?

If jurors get up from their seats for any reason, they will be instructed to return to the seat they originally occupied.

3. Will there be tables in the quiet room so that I can do personal work?

Yes, there will be tables in the quiet room so that you may work during the day and while waiting. Wipes are provided to enable users to wipe chairs and tables as needed. Handles or “touch points” are wiped daily by the cleaning staff.

EXCUSAL REQUESTS

1. What happens if I just don't come? Is there a penalty if I do not appear for jury service or do not complete my service?

If you do not appear for jury service at the date and time directed by the summons, you can be fined for up to \$1,000, put in jail for up to 60 days, or both.

If you do not complete jury service, you can be fined for up to \$1,000, put in jail for up to 90 days, or both.

The relevant laws are Maryland Annotated Code, Courts & Judicial Proceedings Article, Sections [8-504](#) and [8-505](#).

There are also penalties for failing to complete the Juror Qualification Form accurately and for not returning that Form. You can learn more about these penalties [here](#).

2. The jury system is a one-day-one trial, how long is the day? Will I be sent to multiple courtrooms?

The courthouse is open to jurors at 7:30 a.m. daily. Please only use the Saint Paul Street and Fayette Street (handicapped accessible) entrances.

You should expect to be here during normal business hours which are 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. During this time, we will limit the movement of jury panels from the jury assembly areas as much as possible.

Jurors will NOT be sent to multiple courtrooms during jury service at this time. If you are selected for a trial, you will be required to serve for the duration of that trial.

3. I have issues with childcare since schools are not reopening and are only offering virtual classes, what do I do?

The court is allowing a more generous policy on rescheduling. You may postpone your jury service to a date within the next 90 days that may be more convenient for you. If serving during a school break is practical, you may select a date within that range as well. Documentation may be required.

Please call the jury office at 410-333-3775 to reschedule your service. The call center is open and accepts calls Monday through Friday, between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

4. I am a caregiver and need to be home with my loved one, what do I do?

The court is allowing a more generous policy on rescheduling. You may postpone your jury service to a date within the next 90 days that may be more convenient for you to make arrangements.

Please call the jury office at 410-333-3775 to reschedule your service. The call center is open and accepts calls Monday through Friday, between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

5. Myself or a household member has tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 14 days. Do I need to report?

DO NOT REPORT if you or a member of your household has tested positive for COVID-19 or if you are experiencing symptoms. Please call the jury office at 410-333-3775 to reschedule your service. The call center is open and accepts calls Monday through Friday, between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

6. Will I lose my unemployment benefits if I serve on a jury?

No. Under Maryland law, you will not be denied unemployment benefits because you had jury service and were unable to work or seek work. The relevant law is Maryland Annotated Code, Labor & Employment Article, Sections [8-101\(z\)\(3\)\(x\)](#), [8-907\(a\)](#) and [8-1108\(a\)\(1\)](#).

For more information, you can contact the [Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation](#).

FOOD/RESTROOM

1. How will we eat lunch/drink water?

You can lower your mask to eat, drink, or take oral or nasal medications. While doing so, please observe appropriate social distancing. You must replace your mask upon completion.

2. How will water coolers be sanitized?

Wipes are provided to enable users to wipe water coolers as needed. Handles or “touch points” are wiped daily by the cleaning staff.

3. Can I still bring my own lunch and snacks? Can I still eat in the assembly room?

Yes, jurors are allowed to bring their own lunch and snacks. Jurors may eat in the assembly areas but must be mindful of debris, odor and spills when choosing food items. Jurors will only be allowed to remove their masks while eating or drinking and sitting at least six feet apart from one another.

Jurors will be allowed to leave the building for breaks and bring food back into the courthouse.

4. How often are restrooms disinfected? Will this happen during the day?

Restrooms are cleaned at least once daily by housekeeping staff. Soap, hand sanitizer and wipes will be available in the restrooms.

5. Can I bring Lysol aerosol spray?

No. Aerosol sprays are not permitted in the courthouse and cannot be sprayed in the building for the health and safety of others.

6. Will the vending machines and charging stations still be available?

Yes, the vending machines and charging stations will still be available for your convenience. The court will provide cleaning solution and or/wipes to sanitize the vending machines and charging stations before and after your use.

7. Are there receptacles for proper disposal of PPE?

The court will provide trash cans for proper disposal of PPE.

SELF-CHECK-IN KIOSKS

1. Will the touchscreen self-check-in kiosks still be available?

The touchscreen self-check-in kiosks will reduce the amount of time spent face to face with jury staff and will allow you to register faster and more efficiently. If you wish to register with a live person, or have difficulty using the kiosk, staff will be more than willing to assist you.

The court will provide cleaning solution and/or wipes to sanitize the touchscreen self-check-in kiosks before and after your use.

MASKS

1. Will masks be required all day?

Everyone entering the courthouse must wear a mask or face covering at all times. This includes judges, court staff, and anyone over 2 years old. If you are called for jury duty you must also wear a mask. The mask or face covering must cover both the nose and mouth completely.

Neck gaiter masks, bandanas (single and double layered) and ventilator/valve masks will not be permitted.

If you arrive at a courthouse without an adequate face covering or mask, we will give you one. We may also give you an alternative means for remote access, if appropriate and possible. Clear personal shields and other barriers are not a substitute for masks or face covers.

You can lower your mask to eat, drink, or take oral or nasal medications. While doing so, please observe appropriate social distancing. You must replace your mask upon completion.

2. Will defendants and witnesses be unmasked while speaking?

Defendants and witnesses will not be unmasked while speaking.

3. Will I need to remove my mask when speaking in the courtroom?

Jurors will not need to remove their mask while speaking in the courtroom.

4. What happens to people who remove their mask or wear it inappropriately?

Masks must be worn properly while in the courthouse at all times covering both the nose and mouth completely. Any person may be denied entrance or required to leave a court or judicial facility as a result of the screening process or as a result of refusing to comply with the requirements to wear a face mask or covering or maintain social distancing.

5. Can I wear an alternative facemask (e.g. water jug, shoe, Halloween mask) or one with offensive language?

No, masks must follow guidelines outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Neck gaiter masks, bandanas (single and double layered) and ventilator/valve masks will not be permitted. As printed on your summons, proper attire is required. You may be asked to replace your mask if deemed inappropriate.

6. My mask is visibly soiled, saturated or damaged. Will the Court provide another one for me?

If your mask is visibly soiled, saturated or damaged, you may be asked by a Sheriff's Deputy to replace with another one provided by the court.

7. I am deaf, hard of hearing, or rely on lipreading to communicate. Do I have an exception to wearing a mask?

No, you must still wear your mask, however, staff will communicate with you using captioning or written communication, where appropriate. You may express your concerns with the trial judge or jury commissioner upon your arrival.

8. I have difficulty breathing (COPD, asthma, etc.). Do I have an exception to wearing a mask?

The CDC recognizes that wearing masks may not be possible in every situation or for some people. In some situations, wearing a mask may exacerbate a physical or mental health condition, lead to a medical emergency, or introduce significant safety concerns. You must have a licensed physician complete a medical form in advance of your service date or speak to the trial judge upon your arrival.

Please call the jury office at 410-333-3775 to discuss your concerns. The call center is open and accepts calls Monday through Friday, between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

9. How is the air circulated inside of the courthouse? What is the rate at which air is exchanged in the courthouse?

Each HVAC unit has an outside air intake that brings air into the building. Air is exchanged three to five times per hour. The filters are not HEPA filters.

PLEXIGLASS

1. Are there plexiglass barriers between the jurors? Are there plexiglass barriers between staff and the jurors?

The court has installed and will continue to install plexiglass dividers between jurors while in the jury box. In addition, the court is requiring face masks, social distancing and encouraging frequent hand washing following CDC guidelines found [here](#).

In many areas, jury staff are behind plexiglass barriers to protect all users from exposure to COVID-19. All staff will be required to wear a face mask when interacting with the public.

Jurors do have the option to be seen by staff who have a plexiglass barrier if it makes them more comfortable. Face shields, in addition to masks, have been distributed to courthouse staff.

2. Can I wear a face shield?

Yes, face shields are permitted but must be worn along with a mask, not by themselves.

3. Is eye protection provided by the Court?

No, eye protection is not currently provided.

SECURITY

1. Will there be screening at the door? Will they check my temperature?

Consistent with the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Maryland Department of Health (MDH), and local health departments, any person who seeks entrance to courts and judicial facilities shall be:

- a. subject to COVID-19 screening questions,
- b. subject to non-contact temperature checks,
- c. required to wear face masks or coverings,
- d. required to maintain social distancing.

Any person may be denied entrance or required to leave a court or judicial facility as a result of the screening process or as a result of refusing to comply with the requirements to wear a face mask or covering, or maintain social distancing.

2. Will there be COVID-19 testing performed and anyone who tests positive be dismissed immediately?

COVID-19 testing will not be performed on-site. Anyone who tests positive and notifies the court will be dismissed immediately.

For a list of COVID-19 testing facilities in Maryland, you may follow this link [here](#).

3. Will anyone with a fever be sent home? How will they be paid for coming?

If denied entry at the Sheriff Deputy station, your service will not be satisfied, therefore you will not be given credit nor paid for coming.

4. Will access to the courthouse be limited to prospective jurors and essential personnel?

Following our local reopening plan, the courthouse is currently in Phase IV and is open to the public. (As of August 2020). We are restricting the number of people who come into the courthouses on a case by case basis. We are limiting the number of cases we hear. Additionally, many of our cases will continue to be heard remotely.

You may wish to read the Court of Appeals of Maryland Administrative Order on the Progressive Resumption of Full Function of Judiciary Operations Previously Restricted Due to the COVID-19 Emergency ([recited here](#)).

You may also wish to read the Circuit Court for Baltimore City COVID-19 Response Plan for the Progressive Resumption of Full Function of Judiciary Operations ([recited here](#)).

5. What happens if I, another juror, or jury staff test positive while I am serving? How will everyone be notified?

Following the CDC guidelines, a potential exposure means a household contact or having close contact within 6 feet of an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. The timeframe for having contact with an individual includes the period of time of 48 hours before the individual became symptomatic.

Contact tracing is the process of identifying people who may have come into contact with an individual with an infectious disease, in this case COVID-19. The contact tracer reaches out by phone to someone who has tested positive for the virus to determine their whereabouts and close contacts for the two-week period of time when they may have been infectious.

For detailed information on Maryland's contact tracing, covidLINK, you may wish to click [here](#).

6. Who is responsible for the security protocol? What happens with noncompliance?

The Sheriff's Department for the Circuit Court for Baltimore City is responsible for enforcing the security protocol. Any person may be denied entrance or required to leave a court or judicial facility as a result of the screening process or as a result of refusing to comply with the requirements to wear a face mask or covering, or maintain social distancing.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

1. Are people required to sit 6 feet apart?

Yes. All courthouse members, including jurors, the public, and employees are required to maintain a distance of at least six feet.

2. Are the hallways labeled with directional signs?

Yes, the hallways are labeled with signs directing persons to walk with the flow of traffic and six feet apart from one another.

3. I don't want to be confined in an elevator with another person. Can I take the stairs?

The Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse allows for the use of stairways but for security reasons, the Congressman Elijah E. Cummings Courthouse (formerly "Courthouse East") does not.

The court is mandating that persons travelling between floors by way of the elevator inside of the Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse must practice social distancing (there will only be two persons allowed) and no talking will be permitted. The Congressman Elijah E. Cummings Courthouse elevators will allow three persons per elevator.

4. Will court still be held in the Congressman Elijah E. Cummings Courthouse (formerly "Courthouse East")?

Yes, court will be conducted in both the Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse and the Congressman Elijah E. Cummings Courthouse.

TRANSPORTATION

1. My bus line is not operating on a regular schedule. What do I do?

The court encourages you to find a suitable means of transportation to come to and from the courthouse.

If taking public transportation, please visit the Maryland Transit Authority for information on your specific bus route, COVID-19 requirements, and service changes ([here](#)).

2. I don't feel comfortable taking public transportation, where can I park?

Please visit our website to find resources for parking and lunch discounts ([here](#)). Vendors change discount offers at will. The Circuit Court for Baltimore City is not responsible for discounted or changed offers made by vendors.

TRIALS

1. What types of cases will be heard? I don't want to waste my time or risk my health for a minor offense.

The court will resume jury trials involving both criminal and civil matters.

2. If I must report in-person, which courtrooms will be used for jury selection?

Only large courtrooms will be used for jury trials.

3. Will there be any remote/virtual options for remote hearings?

Yes, the court is considering holding parts of civil trials remotely for those persons who have the technological ability to participate virtually. Those who may lack the technology, or who choose not to participate online, must come into the courthouse for the duration of the trial.

If asked to participate remotely in a civil trial, that will be communicated by the trial judge before your date of service.

Additional information on Maryland's virtual courtrooms is available [here](#).

4. What will happen if I don't log in, have technical difficulties, or cannot securely isolate in my house?

Those issues will be handled on a case by case basis by the trial judge. If you believe you will not have an isolated and quiet space to log in, please express those concerns to the trial judge on your date of service.

5. How can we ensure a juror is fair and impartial remotely? What if I doze off or am caught using my phone? Can I record the testimony?

You may not record any proceedings. The trial judge will ensure that all proceedings are fair and impartial.

6. How will I be paid if we opt in for virtual hearings and do not need to report to the courthouse ?

If selected for a panel and given the option of attending a virtual hearing, jurors should still report daily to the jury office to obtain their per diem and for credit for attendance.

Those arrangements will be coordinated at the commencement of the trial.

7. I haven't left my house. Can I schedule a virtual meeting with the jury commissioner's office to discuss my concerns with serving?

At this time, remote meetings will not be held by the jury commissioner's office. You may wish to communicate in writing or speak with the supervisor at 410-333-3775 during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

OTHER

7. Will we be allowed to bring?

- a. Reading Material:** Yes
- b. Pens:** Yes, and encouraged
- c. Sanitizer, Personal Wipes:** Yes, and encouraged
- d. Electronic Devices:** Yes, but must be turned off or set for vibrate while inside the courtroom

8. Is the court in compliance with Governor Hogan's and/or Mayor Young's public health mandates?

The Maryland Judiciary operates under a different branch of government than the executive and legislative branches. Although we do follow the basic mandates outlined by the state governor and local mayor, the court does have the flexibility to resume jury trials in order to further its mission and goals.

You may wish to read the Court of Appeals of Maryland Administrative Order on the Progressive Resumption of Full Function of Judiciary Operations Previously Restricted Due to the COVID-19 Emergency ([recited here](#)).

You may also wish to read the Circuit Court for Baltimore City COVID-19 Response Plan for the Progressive Resumption of Full Function of Judiciary Operations ([recited here](#)).

9. Why is the court calling in jurors during a pandemic?

The Maryland Judiciary provides fair, efficient and effective justice for all. As local and state governments are phasing into reopening, the court is mirroring their efforts to resume jury trials.

10. Have any other states resumed jury trials?

Several states across the United States have resumed jury trials during the pandemic. There have been successes and failures, but we are learning from those situations to ensure the health and safety of all court users here at the Circuit Court for Baltimore City.