

**IN THE COURTS OF ESCAMBIA COUNTY IN THE FIRST JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
IN AND FOR THE STATE OF FLORIDA**

**ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTIVE NO. 2020-05**

**RE: COVID-19 PANDEMIC – COURTROOM OPERATIONS BEGINNING JUNE 1, 2020**

**WHEREAS**, the Supreme Court of Florida has issued AOSC20-23, Amendment 1, reflecting the responsibility of judges and staff to continue to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, while keeping the courts operating to the fullest extent consistent with public safety; and

**WHEREAS** the health, safety, and well-being of courthouse visitors, court employees, and judicial officers are of primary concern for the State Courts System; and

**WHEREAS**, the Chief Judge has directed the administrative judges of the counties of the First Judicial Circuit to formulate plans by which the courts of this Circuit can begin to expand operations beyond the mission-critical levels necessitated by the pandemic, while maintaining the requirements of social distancing which remain prudent and recommended during this time; and

**WHEREAS**, the undersigned is appointed as Administrative Judge in Escambia County in AO2019-29; it is,

**ORDERED:**

- 1) This directive is effective June 1, 2020, and shall be in effect until further order of the undersigned or intervening direction from the Chief Judge or Chief Justice.
- 2) As ordered by the Chief Justice, all jury selection proceedings, criminal and civil jury trials, and grand jury proceedings are suspended through July 2, 2020.
- 3) Temperature scanning equipment will be placed at the entrances to the M.C. Blanchard Building and the Theodore Bruno Building. Those persons with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or above will not be permitted to enter the facilities. If such an individual has

a scheduled court appearance, that individual shall provide his or her name and the name of the presiding judge to the security staff stationed at the entry, and shall be given contact information and instructions for rescheduling his or her court appearance.

- 4) Per the previous order of the Chief Judge, only those individuals with business before the court (parties, witnesses, victims, attorneys, case managers, supervisors, etc.) or those with official business with any other agencies or community resources housed within the courthouse facilities should attempt to enter courthouse facilities. Those attempting to enter said facilities will be asked their reasons for requesting entry. Courtroom attendance shall be limited to attorneys, parties, victims, and necessary witnesses or other required persons, as well as essential court staff. Members of the media shall be permitted, subject to existing protocols for camera clearance. Parents and/or guardians of juveniles shall also be permitted to accompany juveniles appearing in court. All persons having official business within the courthouse facilities should exit **immediately** as soon as that business is concluded, in order to maintain as few people as possible within the facilities at any given time. All persons should visit the minimum number of locations inside courthouse facilities required to conduct their business. Any business which may be conducted by phone or email should be conducted by phone or email, and not in person merely for the sake of convenience.
- 5) In all courtrooms and common areas, masks are to be permitted and encouraged. When sufficient supplies are available for public distribution, masks will be provided for those persons who wish to wear a mask but do not have one available.

- 6) Criminal proceedings are to be given priority in the scheduling of courtrooms. Due to social distancing requirements, the court calendar has been altered to provide for hearings with staggered report times for parties.
- 7) For plea days and docket days, the Clerk's office will be responsible for setting and noticing attorneys of staggered start times for out-of-custody defendants. For all other criminal matters pertaining to out-of-custody defendants, judges are directed to set and notice attorneys of staggered start times for hearings.
- 8) Inmates will not be transported from the jail to courtrooms. Exceptions to this policy will be made only with approval of the undersigned or the Chief Judge, and only in exceptional circumstances.
- 9) Judges shall limit the number of people in courtrooms at any one time to only that number which permits the maintenance of six feet of distance between individuals.
- 10) Arraignments – All criminal defendants (felony and misdemeanor) represented by counsel who intend to enter a plea of not guilty at arraignment must file a written waiver of appearance and plea. It is the intent of this directive that no one represented by counsel should personally appear for arraignment unless a specific need exists to address the Court; i.e., the entry of a plea of guilty/nolo contendere or a motion related to bond.
- 11) Docket Days – Out-of-custody defendants represented by counsel who intend to either ask for a continuance or for the setting of a trial date should move the Court for same in writing and at least one week prior to the hearing date. Motions should be accompanied by proposed orders, and continuances should be liberally granted. As with arraignments, it is the intent of this directive that no one represented by counsel

will personally appear unless a specific need exists to address the Court. In-custody defendants should also make such requests for continuance or for trial dates in writing, through counsel. Those inmates needing to be heard personally will be heard via video-link to the jail.

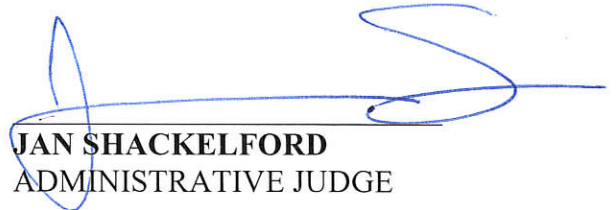
- 12) If the State intends to enter a *nolle prosequi* in a criminal case, the division prosecutor should submit the appropriate document in advance of the next scheduled court date, and shall give proper notice to the relevant defendant and counsel no later than one week prior to that date. Defendants and attorneys who have received such notices will not be required to appear in court.
- 13) No in-person civil proceedings will be held in the M.C. Blanchard Judicial Building. If a unique matter arises necessitating an in-person civil hearing, the Cobb Building courtroom may be scheduled through Court Administration.
- 14) No in-person family law proceedings will be held in the M.C. Blanchard Judicial Building, with the exception of DVI proceedings and contempt proceedings in which a person may be taken into custody.
- 15) Drug Court, TEAM Court, and Veterans Court will be conducted via videoconferencing technology unless an in-person hearing is necessary to take a participant into custody.
- 16) In order to reduce the possibility of transmission of the virus, judges are required to manage their robes without the assistance of courtroom deputies.
- 17) Judges who are aware of an upcoming court event requiring the attendance of large numbers of people, other than those which are commonly known (such as docket days



and arraignments) should make the undersigned and/or Court Administration aware of the event as soon as practicable so that adequate arrangements can be made.

- 18) Individuals using stairwells in the M.C. Blanchard Building should observe social distancing protocols at all times.

**DONE AND ORDERED** in chambers at Pensacola, Escambia County, Florida, this 20th day of May 2020.



**JAN SHACKELFORD**  
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE

Copies furnished to:

All Judges, Escambia County  
Robin Wright, Trial Court Administrator  
William Eddins, State Attorney, First Judicial Circuit  
Bruce Miller, Public Defender, First Judicial Circuit  
Pam Childers, Clerk of Courts  
David Morgan, Escambia County Sheriff  
Chief Tommi Lyter, Pensacola Police Department  
Richard Currey, Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel  
Elizabeth Miller, Child Welfare Legal Services  
Mark Jones, President of Family First Network  
Bryan Carter, Guardian Ad Litem  
Mike Ellis, Department of Revenue  
Paul Wallis, Department of Juvenile Justice  
Julia Gaither, Department of Corrections  
Richard Powell, Department of Corrections  
Lt. Justin Robbins, Escambia County Sheriff  
For Broadcast by: Escambia-Santa Rosa Bar Association  
For Posting at [www.FirstJudicialCircuit.org](http://www.FirstJudicialCircuit.org)