

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF SCHUYLKILL COUNTY  
TWENTY-FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

CLERK OF COURTS OFFICE  
2020 DEC 30 PM 1:40  
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY, PA

IN RE: 21<sup>st</sup> Judicial District : NO. AD-20-2020  
Actions Pursuant to Declaration :  
of Judicial Emergency :  
2020.1 :

SUPPLEMENTAL EMERGENCY  
ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

BALDWIN, P.J.

AND NOW, this 30<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2020, with the number of COVID-19 virus cases significantly increasing within the County, it is the determination of the Court that, for the health and safety of those who work in and visit the Schuylkill County Courthouse, the Magisterial District Courts, and other County facilities, the judicial emergency is extended until March 8, 2021. It is the intent of the Court, in cooperation with the Schuylkill County Commissioners, to limit the necessity for the public to enter Court and County facilities in order to access public services.

Personal Safety

As referenced in this order, the “public” shall include everyone except County and Judicial employees and elected or appointed officers.

All members of the public shall enter the Courthouse through the Public Entrance where they will be subject to a noninvasive temperature check.

All employees and elected or appointed County and Judicial officials, when entering the Courthouse for the first time on a given day, shall enter only through the Public Entrance, the Laurel Street entrance, or the North Entrance from the parking lot. If no personnel are available to monitor their temperature when first entering the building for each day, every employee and elected or appointed County and Judicial official shall present himself/herself either to the personnel manning the Public Entrance or to the Sheriff's Office for a temperature check.

The Sheriff and his deputies are authorized and directed to deny entrance to the Courthouse to anyone who has an elevated temperature or is visibly ill, and to anyone who refuses to submit to a noninvasive temperature check or to wear a protective face covering. The protective face covering requirement shall not apply to children under two years old or to individuals who cannot wear a face covering due to a medical condition.

When an individual with a scheduled proceeding or appointment is denied entrance to the Courthouse, the individual shall wait outside while the presiding judge or county official is contacted for further direction.

Members of the public who come to the Courthouse to visit a Court or County office without an appointment will be given a phone number for that office to call for permission to enter, which shall be granted only if entry at that time can be accommodated subject to the requirements of appropriate social distancing within that

office. Waiting in line in the hallways is prohibited. If not, the visitor may be given the option of waiting outside until called to enter as someone leaves or of making an appointment to return.

A protective face covering must be worn at all times by everyone while in the courtrooms, offices, hallways, and common areas of all Court and County facilities; except that a face covering shall not be required for an individual while working alone within an office enclosed on four sides.

A Magisterial District Judge, or his/her designee is authorized to deny entrance to the Magisterial District Judge's office to any individual who has an elevated temperature or is visibly ill, or who refuses to submit to a noninvasive temperature check if asked to do so or to wear a protective face covering. Public access to the Magisterial District Court offices shall be controlled in a manner that adheres to social distancing requirements.

Any individual who believes he/she is being unjustly denied access to the Courthouse or a Magisterial District Court may immediately contact the District Court Administrator at (570) 628-1226.

Those individuals admitted for a judicial proceeding or appointment with a county official shall go directly to the designated courtroom, hearing room, or office, and shall directly leave the building as soon as the judicial proceeding or appointment has concluded. Except for family members who reside in the same household, social distancing shall be maintained inside all Court and County facilities.

Family, relatives, and friends of parties to proceedings are not permitted to enter the Courthouse or a Magisterial District Court unless they are necessary witnesses or their presence is necessary in order to promote the health and safety of an individual required to be in the facility. Witnesses shall remain outside until summoned to the courtroom.

Court and County employees shall remain in their offices unless their duties require them to go to other locations, in which case, they must return to their office as soon as that business is concluded.

Although the Courthouse Canteen will be open for the sale of food or drink, no one may assemble, congregate, or make use of the tables and chairs in the area adjacent to the Canteen.

The Courthouse points of entry and the supervision of individuals within the Courthouse shall be under the direction and control of Sheriff Joseph Groody and his deputies, who are responsible for enforcing compliance with this Administrative Order.

### **Members of the Press**

Members of the press may be admitted to all court proceedings and public meetings. Each news agency shall be permitted one reporter within a court proceeding or public meeting.

### **Title Searchers**

Title searchers shall be granted access to County and Court records by appointment only. The appointments shall be scheduled to permit only one title searcher at a time in a County or Court office, with the exception of the Recorder of Deeds Office where an additional title searcher may be permitted in the Office's basement vault.

### **Payments**

Payments tendered at all County and Court offices shall be accepted by mail, electronically (online), or by telephone, and the use of such means is strongly encouraged; however, cash payments in-person may not be refused.

Individuals electing to make cash payments of costs, fines, and restitution to the Clerk of Courts shall do so by placing said payments inside envelopes supplied by the Clerk of Courts at the public entrance and depositing the envelopes in the Clerk of Courts lockbox at that entrance. Bail may be posted directly in the Clerk of Courts Office.

### **Court Filings**

The District Attorney's Office and each filing office of the Court shall maintain a drop box under the supervision of the Sheriff at the public entrance. Litigants and

counsel shall file legal papers or pleadings by mail or by depositing them in the appropriate drop box. Proposed plea agreements and other criminal documents to be considered by the District Attorney shall be deposited in the District Attorney's drop box. Representatives from each filing office shall retrieve the filings from that office's designated box at various times throughout each day, which times shall include at 4:00 p.m. daily. Filings deposited in a drop box by 4:00 p.m. shall be clocked in and docketed as filed the same day. When a filing is due on a specific date and the filing party cannot deposit the document in the drop box by 4:00 p.m., the filing party shall phone the filing office to arrange for the document to be filed prior to 4:30 p.m.

### **Court Proceedings**

To the extent reasonably possible, and in a manner consistent with constitutional requirements, all judicial proceedings shall be conducted through the utilization of advanced communication technologies (hereinafter "ACT"). When in-person proceedings are necessary, all participants must wear protective facial coverings, and the proceedings shall be conducted in a manner that allows for appropriate social distancing. Further, in-person proceedings before the Court of Common Pleas, a Magisterial District Judge, or a hearing officer shall be conducted in accordance with a staggered schedule to avoid congregation of participants within the courtrooms and in the hallways adjoining courtrooms.

To the extent Pa.R.Crim.P. 119 restricts, directly or indirectly, the use of ACT for preliminary hearings, sentencing hearings, and parole, probation, and restrictive supervision revocation hearings, said rule is suspended through March 8, 2021.

Counsel are encouraged to prepare their clients and witnesses prior to the day of the proceeding by telephone or other ACT. Counsel and participants shall be denied entrance to the Courthouse or Magisterial District Court prior to fifteen (15) minutes before the scheduled time for the judicial proceeding.

**Criminal Matters**

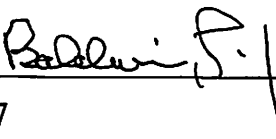
Except for trials, all proceedings in cases where the defendants is incarcerated shall be conducted via ACT.

Status conferences for defendants who are incarcerated at the time of the conference shall be conducted only with counsel.

Drug Court shall be conducted via ACT in lieu of in-person proceedings.

**This Order shall become effective January 4, 2021.**

BY THE COURT,

  
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