

**IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF LANCASTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT**

IN RE: MODIFIED COURT
OPERATIONS REGARDING
COVID-19 MITIGATION EFFORTS

: No. A.D. 9-2022
:
: Supreme Court Docket No. 44 MM 2020

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

AND NOW, this 28th day of February, 2022, pursuant to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance,¹ it is hereby ORDERED as follows:

1. As of February 25, 2022, the County of Lancaster is now identified as an area of “low” community transmission for COVID-19 based on current CDC data. See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>.

2. Effective immediately, masks will no longer be required by those entering a court facility, including court employees. **People may choose to mask at any time, and no one under the supervision and authority of the President Judge may direct a person to remove their mask.** Per CDC guidelines, people with symptoms, a positive COVID-19 test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask. See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>.

3. At the discretion of the presiding judge or hearing officer, advanced communication technology shall continue to be utilized where practical in all civil proceedings.

¹ On February 25, 2021, the CDC issued new mask guidance based on “COVID-19 Community Levels.” This new tool for determining community levels looks at hospital beds being used, hospital admissions, and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in an area. See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>. The CDC continues to recommend that both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals wear face coverings in public indoor settings in areas identified as having “high” community transmission to maximize protection from the Omicron variant and to further reduce the spread of the virus. Those residents of communities with “low” community transmission rates need only continue to stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and get tested if positive symptoms present. In communities with a “medium” level of transmission, residents are advised to talk to a healthcare provider about whether there exists a need to wear a mask and take other precautions if a person is at risk for severe illness. Id.

LANCASTER COUNTY
CLERK OF COURT
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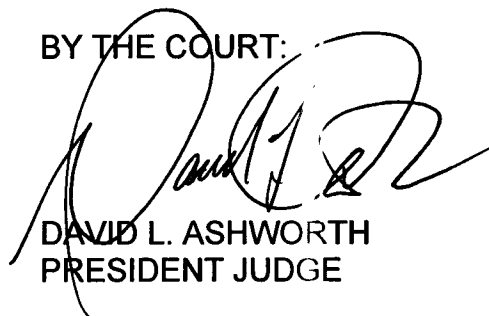
4. The Court of Common Pleas and the District Judges are encouraged to favor advanced communication technology for criminal proceedings where it is appropriate and consistent with due process, through April 1, 2022.² Judges shall be present in the courthouse or other court facility whenever a proceeding is being conducted by advanced communication technology, except for extraordinary circumstances, such as when court properties have been closed due to inclement weather or other emergency under Pa.R.J.A. Nos. 1950-1954, or when a proceeding is not being conducted during normal business hours.

5. All criminal court continuances will be evaluated by the presiding judge on a case-by-case basis. Any postponement resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic shall be considered a court delay and shall constitute excludable time for purposes of the application of Pa.R.Crim.P. 600. See Pa.R.Crim.P. 600(C)(1); Pa.R.Crim.P. 600 cmt.

6. Detailed protocols for the handling of matters in each division of the Court of Common Pleas will be provided on the Court's website: <https://court.co.lancaster.pa.us/>.

7. This Order is effective immediately.

BY THE COURT:



DAVID L. ASHWORTH
PRESIDENT JUDGE

ATTEST: *Rhonda F. Alb*
Ch. Dep.

² See Supreme Court Order of February 9, 2022, at No. 44 MM 2020, authorizing the suspension of state or local rules that restrict the use of advanced communication technology in Lancaster County court proceedings through April 1, 2022.

Copies to: Lancaster County Board of Judges
Lancaster County Magisterial District Judges
Lancaster County District Court Administrator
Lancaster County Adult Probation & Parole Services
Lancaster County Children and Youth Social Service Agency
Lancaster County Clerk of Courts
Lancaster County Clerk of the Orphans' Court
Lancaster County District Attorney
Lancaster County Domestic Relations
Lancaster County Juvenile Probation
Lancaster County Law Library
Lancaster County Office of Official Court Reporter
Lancaster County Prison
Lancaster County Prothonotary
Lancaster County Public Defender
Lancaster County Register of Wills
Lancaster County Sheriff
Lancaster County Board of Commissioners
Lancaster County Solicitor
Lancaster County Administrator & Chief Clerk
Lancaster County Municipal Police Departments
Pennsylvania State Police