



DISTRICT COURT OF MARYLAND FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY
PHASE II REOPEN PLAN
JUNE 5, 2020 - JULY 19, 2020

SAFETY MEASURES

- All visitors entering the Essex District Courthouse, the Temporary Towson District Courthouse, the “old” Catonsville District Courthouse and the Towson Annex Building, must wear a mask or face covering.
- Upon entry to any courthouse building in Baltimore County District Court or the Annex Building, all visitors must participate in the health screening protocol. The protocol includes providing responses to the Initial Screening Questionnaire and a no-contact temperature reading.
- Any individual who answers “yes” to any question on the Initial Screening Questionnaire or who refuses to participate in the screening process must be denied entry into the courthouse building or Annex Building.
- Any individual who has a scheduled court date and is denied entry must provide their name, case information and phone number to the bailiff. The information will be forwarded to the courtroom to determine if the case can be heard by remote participation or must be postponed. The clerk will advise the denied party of the court’s determination.
- All visitors are required to maintain 6-foot social distance in accordance with the recommended guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH).
- Social distancing markings have been placed on the floors, seating areas, elevators, stairwells, bathrooms and other public spaces throughout the courthouse building, courtrooms and the Annex building.
- Signage has been posted throughout the courthouse building and the Annex building reminding visitors to maintain social distancing, to wear a mask or face covering and to sanitize and/or wash their hands frequently.
- Hand sanitizer stations have been installed.
- Department of General Services (DGS) will perform extra cleanings throughout the day and will maintain a public log to record cleaning of high touch areas such as elevator buttons, handrails and doorknobs. Cleaning will be completed using EPA-approved disinfectant.
- Plexiglass partitions will be installed to separate court personnel from each other and from the public in places where 6-foot social distancing cannot be maintained.
- Docket case counts have been substantially reduced and scheduled on a staggered basis to reduce the number of individuals in the courtroom at one time.
- To avoid handling documentary evidence, such evidence may be submitted electronically in advance of the court trial, whenever possible.
- While at the trial tables, attorneys may social distance from their clients by sitting at opposite ends of the trial table and communicating by passing written notes.

- Trial tables and the witness stand will be cleaned with an EPA-approved disinfectant after each use.
- Individuals in the courtroom must maintain social distancing by sitting in designated spaces where social distancing markers have been placed.
- An individual who is testifying or otherwise addressing the court may lower their mask or face covering while speaking and should return their mask or face covering when finished.
- All court personnel, including judges, commissioners and bailiffs, must wear a mask or face covering or a plastic face shield.
- All court personnel, including judges, commissioners and bailiffs, must participate in the health screening protocol. The protocol includes providing responses to the Initial Screening Questionnaire and a no-contact temperature reading.
- The number of court personnel will be reduced to accommodate social distancing requirements. Court personnel will be rotated and encouraged to telework, Whenever possible.

REMOTE PARTICIPATION

- Remote participation is encouraged and may be used throughout Phase II operations.
- Anyone who wishes to have their case heard by remote participation should contact the Clerk’s Office or submit a written request.
- A request for remote participation should include the requester’s name, phone number, email address, case name, case number and court date.
- The clerk will contact the appropriate parties regarding the request.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Clerk’s Office is closed. Filings may be submitted as indicated below:

- Drop-Boxes at each courthouse location: Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- U.S. Mail
- MDEC

Essex District Courthouse – 8914 Kelso Drive, Essex, MD 21221

- Clerks’ Office - (410) 512-2300
- Commissioners’ Office – (410) 512-2328

Temporary Towson Courthouse – 1 Rolling Cross Road, Catonsville, MD 21228

- Clerks’ Office – (410) 512-2000
- Commissioners’ Office – (410) 512-2030

“Old” Catonsville District Courthouse – 900 Walker Avenue, Catonsville, MD 21228

- Clerks’ Office – (410) 512-2500

Daily Docket Website: www.mdcourts.gov/district/directories/courtmap

Maryland Judiciary Website: www.mdcourts.gov

CRIMINAL MATTERS

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Beginning the week of June 22, 2020, criminal and must appear serious traffic cases will be scheduled in all three court locations.
- Dockets in all three court locations will be scheduled at four (4) sessions: 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. with no more than 9 cases (4 criminal /5 must appear serious traffic) per session.
- To comply with the CDC guidelines for social distancing, most courtrooms can only accommodate 20 – 26 people. As a result, it may be necessary to limit attendees in the courtroom to prosecutors, criminal defense attorneys and/or public defenders, defendants, testifying witnesses, victims, law enforcement and media with credentials.
- For Essex and old Catonsville courthouses, only two courtrooms will conduct criminal/must appear-serious traffic cases. Each courthouse will have one courtroom available for extra witnesses to wait or for public defenders and/or private defense attorneys to communicate with their clients while maintaining 6-foot social distance.
- For Temporary Towson courthouse, no more than four courtrooms will conduct hearings: two courtrooms on the third floor and two courtrooms on the fourth floor. At least one other courtroom will remain available for extra witnesses to wait or for public defenders and/or private defense attorneys to communicate with their clients while maintaining 6-foot social distance. Attorney conference rooms will be available.

BAIL REVIEWS/BENCH WARRANTS

- All bail review hearings including requests for second bail review hearings and bench warrants for any court location in Baltimore County will be heard by video conference with the Detention Center daily at 1:00 PM at the Temporary Towson courthouse.
- Prosecutors, public defenders and private criminal defense attorneys may participate remotely.
- Anyone who wishes to participate remotely should contact the Clerk's Office and provide the defendants name, the case number and a phone number.

CRIMINAL COMPETENCY MATTERS

- All criminal competency matters, and mental health evaluation hearings will be heard at the Temporary Towson courthouse.
- All matters will be handled by remote participation, whenever possible. Defendants will not be transported to the court. Instead, defendants may be able to remain in their housing units. The attorney may waive the defendant's presence at the hearing, unless justice requires otherwise.
- Status hearings regarding competency matters will be held every other Tuesday or as justice requires.
- Hearings on mental health evaluations may require in-person proceedings. Such matters will be scheduled every other Tuesday or as justice requires.

- Cases involving defendants who are opined to be competent to stand trial, whenever possible, should be scheduled promptly for a bail review to determine pretrial release conditions pending a trial date.
- Defendants who are deemed competent to stand trial should have their case set for trial as soon as possible.
- When possible, prosecutors, public defenders and any other witnesses may participate remotely for competency matters, including status conferences.

MATTERS INVOLVING LOCALLY INCARCERATED DEFENDANTS

- Beginning the week of June 22, 2020, criminal and must appear serious traffic cases involving locally incarcerated defendants will be scheduled, on a priority basis, at Temporary Towson courthouse. It may be necessary to schedule some cases involving locally incarcerated defendants at the Essex and old Catonsville courthouses.
- These matters will be scheduled up to twice per week in all court locations. Dockets in all court locations will be scheduled at four (4) sessions: 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. No more than 9 cases (4 criminal /5 must appear serious traffic) will be scheduled per session.
- Dunbar and Watkins will continue to transport defendants to court from the detention center. Three transport vehicles will be used to help maintain social distancing.
- Defendants who are transported will complete a transfer form prior to leaving the detention center. The transfer form will include the following health check/screening information: the inmates' temperature reading and the COVID-19 screening questions.
- The detention center will provide each inmate with a mask prior to leaving the facility.
- If, because of the defendant's temperature or responses to the COVID-19 screening questions, a defendant is unable to be transported or is denied entry upon arrival, the defendant's case will be postponed.
- If the defendant does not need to be present because of the resolution of the case (such as when a nolle prosequi or stet of the charge will be entered), the case may proceed without the defendant, unless justice requires otherwise.
- If the case will be resolved by trial, it may be necessary to hold the case until later in the docket for the trial to be conducted or the case may be postponed and rescheduled on another court date that can accommodate the trial.

GUILTY PLEAS WITH DEFERRAL OF INCARCERATION START DATE

- Beginning the week of June 22, 2020, criminal cases, including must appear serious traffic matters, will be scheduled at the Temporary Towson, Essex and Catonsville courthouses.
- The parties are encouraged to discuss cases in advance of the scheduled court date to resolve the case by a plea.
- If a plea has been reached, the case should proceed on the scheduled date to verdict and to sentencing, unless justice requires otherwise.

- If no plea has been reached and the case must be resolved by a trial, it may be necessary to hold the case until later in the docket for the trial to be conducted or the case may be postponed and rescheduled on another court date that can accommodate the trial.
- If the sentencing of the defendant will include a period of incarceration, deferral of the start date for any incarceration may be considered, in conjunction with the status of the COVID-19 pandemic.

PRELIMINARY HEARINGS WITH A PROPOSED RESOLUTION

- Cases scheduled for a preliminary hearing will be heard at the Temporary Towson courthouse every Friday, starting June 12, 2020. Cases will be scheduled on a staggered basis throughout the court day.
- For non-incarcerated defendants whose felony charges are being dismissed or amended to misdemeanor charges, whenever possible, those cases will be handled by filing the pleadings electronically through MDEC. The case will receive a new trial date and will be removed from the preliminary hearing docket.
- For incarcerated defendants whose charges are being dismissed or amended to misdemeanor charges, whenever possible, those cases may be handled by video conference with the detention center. These cases may be scheduled on the bail review docket where defendant may receive a second bail review given the change in the charges.
- Anticipating that the Grand Jury will resume on June 15, 2020, the State may be able to provide the court with a list of cases that will be presented to the Grand Jury for possible indictment.
- For incarcerated defendants whose case will be presented to the Grand Jury but for which the Grand Jury has not issued an indictment yet, the inmate should not be transported to the court. Instead, the case will be postponed on the record in open court unless a request has been filed through MDEC in advance of the preliminary hearing date.
- Preliminary hearings for which no resolution has been reached, no waiver of the preliminary hearing has been entered and for which a hearing must be conducted should be rescheduled for witness testimony.

QUARANTINE AND/OR ISOLATION VIOLATIONS

- To date, Baltimore County District Court has not received any quarantine and/or isolation violations.
- Any such filings will be heard at the Temporary Towson courthouse location.
- If circumstances require and whenever possible, violations of quarantine and/or isolation orders may be heard by remote participation.
- Prosecutors, public defenders, criminal defense attorneys, law enforcement and other witnesses may be able to participate remotely in these hearings.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTECTIVE ORDERS, PEACE ORDERS AND EXTREME RISK PROTECTIVE ORDERS (ERPO)

GENERAL INFORMATION

- During Phase II, cases will be scheduled in Temporary Towson and Essex courthouse. No cases will be scheduled in “old” Catonsville.
- From June 8, 2020 through June 19, 2020, dockets will be scheduled daily on a staggered basis throughout the court day.
- Beginning the week of June 22, 2020 and throughout the remainder of Phase II, cases will be scheduled on a staggered basis throughout the court day as follows: (1) Temporary Towson courthouse - Monday, Wednesday and Friday; (2) Essex Courthouse – Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday; and (3) ‘Old” Catonsville courthouse – no cases.
- For Essex courthouse, only two courtrooms will hold hearings for these cases. There will be one courtroom available for extra witnesses to wait or for attorneys to communicate with their clients while maintaining 6-foot social distance.
- For Temporary Towson courthouse, up to four courtrooms will hold hearings: two courtrooms on the third floor and two courtrooms on the fourth floor. At least one other courtroom will remain available for extra witnesses to wait or attorneys to communicate with their clients while maintaining 6-foot social distance. Attorney conference rooms will be available.
- To comply with the CDC guidelines for social distancing, most courtrooms can only accommodate 20 – 26 people. As a result, it may be necessary to limit attendees in the courtroom to parties, attorneys, testifying witnesses, advocates and media with credentials.

TEMPORARY AND FINAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTECTIVE ORDERS, PEACE ORDERS AND EXTREME RISK PROTECTIVE ORDERS

- From June 8, 2020 through June 19, 2020, cases involving temporary or final domestic violence protective orders, peace orders, extreme risk protective orders (ERPOs), motions to dismiss or to modify and contempt petitions will be heard daily and scheduled on a staggered basis throughout the court day.
- Beginning the week of June 22, 2020 and throughout the remainder of Phase II, cases will be scheduled on a staggered basis throughout the court day as follows: (1) Temporary Towson courthouse - Monday, Wednesday and Friday; (2) Essex Courthouse – Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday; and (3) ‘Old” Catonsville courthouse – no cases.
- During Phase II, all temporary or final hearings, motions to dismiss or to modify and contempt petitions will be heard at Temporary Towson or Essex courthouses. No cases will be scheduled at “old” Catonsville District courthouse.
- Judges will review the dockets to determine whether a case can be heard by remote participation or in-person.
- If the court determines that a case will be heard by remote participation, the clerk will contact the appropriate parties to coordinate the remote hearing. Consideration should be given to

handling unserved temporary matters and waiver of appearance protective order cases by remote participation, unless justice requires otherwise.

- If a party wishes to have their case heard by remote participation, the party should contact the clerk's office or send a written request to the court. The request should include the requester's name, phone number, email address, case name, case number and court date. The clerk will contact the appropriate parties regarding the request.
- Unless the parties are notified that a case will be heard by remote participation, the case will be heard in-person.

CIVIL MATTERS

GENEREAL INFORMATION

- Beginning the week of June 22, 2020 and throughout the remainder of Phase II, cases will be scheduled as needed on a staggered basis throughout the court day.
- Cases will be heard at all three court locations.
- For Essex courthouse, only two courtrooms will hold hearings on these cases. There will be one courtroom available for extra witnesses to wait or for attorneys to communicate with their clients while maintaining 6-feet social distance.
- For Temporary Towson courthouse, up to four courtrooms will hold hearings: two courtrooms on the third floor and two courtrooms on the fourth floor. At least one other courtroom will remain available for extra witnesses to wait or attorneys to communicate with their clients while maintaining 6-feet social distance. Attorney conference rooms will be available.
- To comply with the CDC guidelines for social distancing, most courtrooms can only accommodate 20 – 26 people. As a result, it may be necessary to limit attendees in the courtroom to parties, attorneys, testifying witnesses and media with credentials.

BODY ATTACHMENTS

- Body Attachments will be heard in-person at the Temporary Towson courthouse location and will be scheduled daily at 1:00 p.m.

LANDLORD/TENANT – EMERGENCY BREACH OF LEASE CASES

- Breach of Lease cases involving threats or injury to people or property will be considered emergency matters and scheduled for a hearing.
- Any such cases will be scheduled as needed during one of four (4) sessions: 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.
- To identify an Emergency Breach of Lease case, the complaint may include the following language: "Emergency Breach of Lease (Phase II) pursuant to the Administrative Order on the Progressive Resumption of Full Function of Judiciary Operations Previously Restricted Due to COVID-19 Emergency."

LANDLORD TENANT – EMERGENCY WRONGFUL DETAINER

- Wrongful Detainer cases may be considered emergency matters and scheduled for a hearing.
- All such cases will be scheduled as needed during one of four (4) sessions: 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.
- To identify an Emergency Wrongful Detainer action, the complaint may include the following language: “Emergency Wrongful Detainer (Phase II) pursuant to the Administrative Order on the Progressive Resumption of Full Function of Judiciary Operations Previously Restricted Due to COVID-19 Emergency.”

EMERGENCY EVALUATION PETITIONS

- Emergency Evaluation Petitions will be heard immediately upon filing, either in-person or remotely at the Temporary Towson courthouse and at the Essex courthouse.
- Beginning June 22, 2020, emergency evaluations petitions will also be heard at the “old” Catonsville District courthouse.

COMMISSIONERS

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Commissioners are available 24 hours per day/7 days per week at Temporary Towson or Essex courthouse locations.
- Anyone who wishes to see the Court Commissioner must wear a mask or face covering, must participate in the screening procedure and must maintain social distancing when possible.
- Anyone who is denied entrance as result of the screening protocol must provide their name and phone number to the bailiff or guard who will give the information to the Court Commissioner.
- The Court Commissioner will call the individual to provide instructions to the individual for handling the matter by remote participation.
- There are no Commissioners stationed at the “old” Catonsville District courthouse located at 900 Walker Avenue, Catonsville, MD. 21228. Instead, Commissioners have been reassigned to the Temporary Towson courthouse located at 1 Rolling Cross Road, Catonsville, MD. 21228.
- All matters that could have been processed at the “old” Catonsville courthouse will be handled at the Temporary Towson courthouse location.
- To contact a Commissioner at the Temporary Towson courthouse, please call (410) 512-2030.
- To contact a Commissioner at the Essex courthouse, please call (410) 512-2328.

NEW INTERIM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTECTIVE ORDERS, PEACE ORDERS AND EXTREME RISK PROTECTIVE ORDERS (ERPOs)

- From June 5, 2020 through July 19, 2020, all new interim domestic violence protective orders, peace orders and extreme risk protective orders (ERPOs) will be heard by the Court Commissioners.
- Commissioners will obtain the petitioner's phone number, in addition to all other required information and advise the petitioner that the case may be heard by remote participation.
- Commissioners will provide petitioners with information regarding available services which petitioners can choose to use, if they wish.
- If the Court Commissioner grants the interim order, the Court Commissioner will provide the petitioner with a copy of the interim order along with any additional information related to the Phase II court operations.

INITIAL APPEARANCES

- All Initial Appearances will be heard by Commissioners via video conferencing. Arrested defendants will be transported to one of the following four police precincts: Dundalk, Towson, Woodlawn or Catonsville.
- Commissioners located at Temporary Towson and Essex courthouses will conduct the initial appearance.
- Attorneys who are part of the Appointed Attorneys Program or private defense attorneys will participate remotely by phone.

APPLICATION FOR STATEMENTS OF CHARGES, ACCEPTANCE OF BAIL BONDS, AND BENCH WARRANT SATISFACTIONS

- Applications for Statement of Charges, Acceptance of Bail Bonds and Bench Warrant Satisfactions will be taken at Temporary Towson courthouse and Essex courthouse.