



Reduction of Court Operations Phase III Update

On November 12, 2020 Chief Judge Barbera issued a Fifth Administrative Order Restricting Statewide Judiciary Operations Due to the COVID-19 Emergency due to a surge of COVID-19 cases. District Court operations are restricted to Phase III operations effective November 16, 2020 and will run until December 31, 2020.

The District Court will hear limited actions including civil, serious traffic, regular traffic, criminal cases, other civil proceedings and certain landlord tenant case types.

To prepare for reduced court operations at the District Court for Howard and Carroll Counties, Administrative Judge Pamila J. Brown institutes the following COVID-19 action plan Response Plan for the Reduced Function of Court Operations, observing best practices to protect the safety of court employees and the public, and to address the ordered reduction of services for all court processes.

Procedures established throughout this action plan may need to be modified due to such future orders from the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals and/or the Governor of the State of Maryland.

Action Plan for District Court of Howard and Carroll County:

The District Court for Howard and Carroll Counties will continue to follow recommendations regarding medical screening, social distancing and wearing masks. Each item in this plan will be evaluated at each stage of increased operations.

Safety Protocol

1. All persons entering the District Court will be required to answer the screening questions, have their temperature taken, and wear a face mask or covering and practice social distancing while inside the courthouse.
2. Automatic temporal thermometer checks will continue as and will be evaluated at each phase of increased court operations.
3. If an individual is denied access, they will be provided with a contact list to make the appropriate court department aware and alternatives available.
4. Any person arriving at court more than fifteen minutes before their scheduled hearing time may be asked to remain outside until the scheduled time.
5. To the extent reasonably practicable, uniform social distancing of six feet will be instituted in all areas of the courthouse, including but not limited to, public common areas, elevators, restrooms, conference and meeting rooms, galleries, courtrooms, hearing rooms, waiting areas, break rooms and kitchens.
6. Floor markings (tape or decals) will be placed at various locations for social distancing. The courtroom benches and carpet will be marked where litigants may sit or stand while awaiting each case.

7. It is strongly suggested that only testifying witnesses, parties, and attorneys enter the courthouse. We reserve the right to restrict access, so litigants should not bring unnecessary persons to court. Litigants will not be permitted to wait in the lobby or clerk's office unless space permits.
8. It is encouraged that people limit their movement in the courthouse as much as possible. If communication is needed with personnel in another courtroom, please use your computer or cellphone while court is in recess.
9. Face masks continue to be required in all public areas of the courthouse.
10. The Court, to the extent available, will provide single-use masks for anyone who must enter the courthouse and who is not in possession of a mask or other nose and mouth covering. If anyone refuses to wear the appropriate face covering, they may be denied entry into and/or removed from the building.
11. The decision to wear latex gloves will be left to individuals working throughout the courthouse, and during all court proceedings. Frequent handwashing by is essential. In addition, all evidence must be handled with gloves and the handling and exchanging of paper is strongly discouraged.

Case Management Plan During Reduction of Court Operations

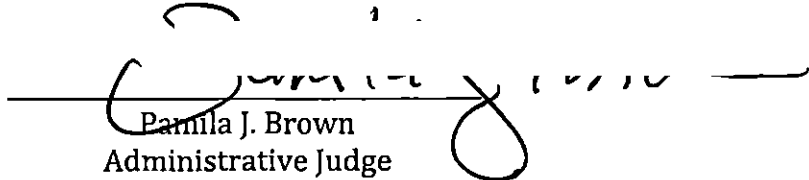
1. Case documents should be filed electronically utilizing the Maryland Electronic Courts System (MDEC). If filing electronically is not possible for any litigant, filing should be done through the physical dropbox located in the main lobby or at the Clerk's office during operating hours until further notice.

2. During Phase III this court will conduct hearings in person or may conduct the hearings remotely. An Individual may request to participate remotely either by video or telephone. The following form to request to participate remotely is required. The form is located at <https://mdcourts.gov/sites/default/files/court-forms/ccdc110.pdf>. When such dockets are being conducted, the hearing notice will indicate that the hearing is being conducted remotely; however, an individual can still appear in person.
3. Staggered dockets and reduced caseloads will continue to be followed in the District Court for civil, criminal, serious traffic, traffic and domestic civil matters.
4. All temporary and final protective, peace order hearings may be held remotely, and all bail reviews will be heard remotely. Walk-in requests for protection, emergency evaluation will be heard as promptly as possible.
5. The landlord tenant actions that will be heard by the District Court during Phase III are as follows:
 - a) rent escrow actions, provided local inspection practices are capable of being conducted;
 - b) tenant holding over actions and any associated warrants of restitution;
 - c) breach of lease actions and any associated warrants of restitution;
 - d) wrongful detainer actions and any associated warrants of restitution;
 - e) processing of warrants of restitution for failure to pay rent actions.

Subject to any Executive or Agency Order, failure to pay rent filings will be accepted by the District Court but will not be set for a hearing during Phase III. Any failure to pay rent hearing currently set on or after November 16, 2020 through December 31, 2020 is

postponed and will be reset for a hearing when restrictions to court operations are lifted or modified.

November 13, 2020



Pamela J. Brown
Administrative Judge
District 10