

17th JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT

EUGENE G. DOHERTY
CHIEF JUDGE



WINNEBAGO COUNTY COURTHOUSE
400 WEST STATE STREET - ROOM 215
ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS 61101
PHONE 815-319-4800

PRESS RELEASE

Date: May 21, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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17TH CIRCUIT COURT PLANS JUNE 1ST REOPENING

The 17th Judicial Circuit announced plans on how it intends to resume a more traditional court schedule effective June 1, 2020. Chief Judge Doherty advises jurors and litigants to be aware that they will see changes when they arrive at court facilities in Winnebago County and Boone County.

- Masks/Face Coverings: all persons entering the Courthouse should bring their own mask or face covering, as you may be required to wear one.
- Jurors: some jury trials will resume at a reduced level. Steps have been taken to increase spacing between jurors.
- More virtual hearings: the Court will put more reliance on virtual/remote hearings. Litigants should be aware that they may be given instructions on how to attend court remotely.
- Some court locations may be moved or case times rescheduled. Litigants should make sure that the Circuit Clerk has their current contact information, including email address.
- To reduce the number of people in the building, litigants are strongly discouraged from bringing other persons to court with them.

“We will be returning to essentially a full-time schedule,” Judge Doherty said, “but the courthouse process is going to look different. I’m confident we can pull together and cooperate with each other to get through this challenging time.”

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STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
COUNTY OF BOONE
COUNTY OF WINNEBAGO

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 2020-21
TEMPORARY ORDER - COVID-19 PROCEDURE

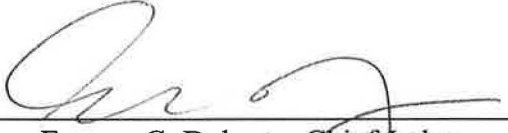
Whereas the Circuit Court has, pursuant to the Supreme Court's order of March 17, 2020, reduced its operations to essential activities,

Whereas, the Supreme Court's order of May 20, 2020, allows circuits to adopt their own plans for a resumption of court activity;

It is therefore ORDERED that, effective June 1, 2020, the following procedures are in effect in the 17th Judicial Circuit:

1. **Return to Additional Court Activity.** The Court's 2nd Amended Administrative Order 2020-18 is hereby repealed and replaced by the following provisions. Effective June 1, 2020, the Court will return to hearing all matters, with the exceptions and provisos set forth below.
2. **Masks / Face Coverings.** Pursuant to General Order 1.03, all persons in public areas of the courthouse, including attorneys, are strongly encouraged to wear a mask or face covering, and must do so if one is offered.
3. **Reduced Call Size.** In order to reduce the number of people in the building(s), the Court will, to the extent possible, reduce the number of cases slotted for each court call. This will in many instances require staggered court times. Attorneys are reminded that it is essential that they appear at the designated time in order to make this process work.
4. **Represented Parties Excused.** Unless ordered by the judge or directed by their attorney, parties in civil and family cases are strongly encouraged not to attend routine court hearings. Attorneys should advise their clients not to attend court unless their attendance is strictly necessary given the nature of the hearing at issue.
5. **Additional Persons Discouraged.** Litigants are strongly discouraged from bringing any other person with them to the courthouse.
6. **Virtual Proceedings.** The Court will begin increased reliance on virtual proceedings and hearings. Parties should plan to appear as scheduled, to make a timely appearance, and should become familiar with the evolving protocols at <https://tinyurl.com/IL17thVC>.
7. **Bench Warrants and Defaults.** Judges may refrain, in appropriate circumstances, from the issuance of bench warrants or the entry of default judgments. Individual judges may, based on the nature of the hearing, the case, and their call, be more flexible in excusing the appearance of a party or defendant.
8. **Civil Jury Trials.** There will be no civil jury trials until August 3, 2020, at the earliest.

9. **Criminal Jury Trials.** All criminal jury trials in Winnebago County will be conducted in courtrooms A and/or D of the Criminal Justice Center. All criminal jury trials in Boone County will be conducted in courtrooms 1 and/or 2.
- a. Courtroom seating will be laid out differently to allow for personal distancing. This may require seating of some jurors in one side of the gallery.
 - b. Jurors will wear masks or face coverings, except when answering questions during voir dire.
 - c. Attorneys will wear masks or face coverings, except when speaking.
10. **Alternate Court Spaces.** The following will be utilized as alternate court spaces:
- a. In Winnebago County, the County Board Room, Winnebago County Courthouse, 400 West State Street, 8th Floor, Rockford, Illinois 61101.
 - b. In Boone County, Community Building Complex of Boone County, 111 West 1st Street, Belvidere, Illinois 61008.
11. **Individual Judge/Division Order.** Attorneys and parties should be aware that individual judges and/or divisions may issue their own guidance on practices in certain courtrooms beginning June 1.

ENTER: 
Eugene G. Doherty, Chief Judge

DATED: 5/21/20