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PRESS RELEASE

Supreme Judicial Court Issues New Order Regarding Jury Trials and Operation of Courts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

9/17/2020

Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court

Executive Office of the Trial Court

Superior Court

District Court

Boston Municipal Court

Juvenile Court

Probate and Family Court

Housing Court

Land Court

Massachusetts Court System

Massachusetts Probation Service

MEDIA CONTACT

Jennifer Donahue and Erika Gully-Santiago

Phone

(617) 557 - 1114 (tel:6175571114)

Online

PublicInfo@sjc.state.ma.us (mailto:PublicInfo@sjc.state.ma.us)

BOSTON, MA — The Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) today [issued an updated order](#) (</supreme-judicial-court-rules/supreme-judicial-court-fourth-updated-order-regarding-court-operations>) regarding the operation of Massachusetts state courts and courthouses during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The order goes into effect immediately. A summary of the key provisions of the new order can be viewed [here](#) (</doc/summary-of-key-provisions-in-supreme-judicial-courts-september-17-covid-19-order>).

Under the new order, on or after October 23, 2020, courts will begin Phase 1 of the gradual resumption of jury trials, in general accordance with the recent recommendations contained in the [report of the Jury Management Advisory Committee](#) (</info-details/jury-management-advisory-committee-report-and-recommendations-on-the-resumption-of>) (JMAC). Phase 1 will consist of a limited number of six-person jury trials that will be conducted in person in a select number of locations, with no more than one trial at a time conducted in each location, and with specified limitations on the number of peremptory challenges available to each party. The cases that will be tried to juries during Phase 1, as well as the locations thereof, will be determined by the Chief Justice of the applicable Trial Court department, in consultation with the Chief Justice of the Trial Court. The SJC shall issue direction regarding Phase 2 of the resumption of jury trials after reviewing the JMAC's evaluation of Phase 1. It is anticipated that Phase 2 will begin in February 2021, although plans regarding the resumption of jury trials may be adjusted in response to significant changes in the rate of COVID-19 transmission in the Commonwealth.

Otherwise, courts will continue to conduct most business virtually and courthouses will continue to be physically open to the public for limited purposes, including certain other in-person proceedings. Judges will continue to schedule and conduct bench trials, either virtually or in-person. Each Trial Court department will continue to post notices to the [court system's COVID-19 webpage](#) (</resource/court-system-response-to-covid-19>) identifying how (virtually or in-person) it is addressing various categories of matters.

Clerks', registers', and recorder's offices will continue to be physically open to the public, while still endeavoring to conduct business virtually as much as possible.

New grand juries may be empaneled subject to certain approvals and such conditions as may be necessary to minimize risk to members of the grand jury, court personnel, and witnesses.

All orders, standing orders, guidelines, and notices issued by any court department or appellate court in response to the pandemic, as well as all amendments, modifications, and supplements are posted upon issuance on the court system's COVID-19 webpage.

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Media Contact

Jennifer Donahue and Erika Gully-Santiago

Phone

(617) 557 - 1114 (tel:6175571114)

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PublicInfo@sjc.state.ma.us (mailto:PublicInfo@sjc.state.ma.us)

Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (/orgs/massachusetts-supreme-judicial-court)

The Supreme Judicial Court is the Commonwealth's highest appellate court.

More (/orgs/massachusetts-supreme-judicial-court)

Executive Office of the Trial Court (/orgs/executive-office-of-the-trial-court)

The Executive Office of the Trial Court facilitates communication and enables joint leadership of the Trial Court by the Chief Justice of the Trial Court and the Court Administrator.

More (/orgs/executive-office-of-the-trial-court)

Superior Court (/orgs/superior-court)

The Superior Court Department is a statewide court that handles both criminal and civil actions.

More (/orgs/superior-court)

District Court (/orgs/district-court)

The District Court Department hears a wide range of criminal, civil, housing, juvenile, mental health, and other types of cases.

More (/orgs/district-court)

Boston Municipal Court (/orgs/boston-municipal-court)

The Boston Municipal Court Department serves the City of Boston, and handles both criminal and civil matters.

More (/orgs/boston-municipal-court)

Juvenile Court (/orgs/juvenile-court)

The Juvenile Court Department oversees civil and criminal matters statewide involving children including youthful offender, care and protection, and delinquency cases.

[More \(/orgs/juvenile-court\)](/orgs/juvenile-court)

Probate and Family Court (/orgs/probate-and-family-court)

The Probate and Family Court Department handles matters involving families and children, like divorce, child support, and wills.

[More \(/orgs/probate-and-family-court\)](/orgs/probate-and-family-court)

Housing Court (/orgs/housing-court)

Summary Process, Small Claims and Supplementary process matters are now available for eFiling. Efiling for Civil cases will be introduced on August 17, 2020. For more information, please see the section below titled 'eFiling in the Housing Court'.

[More \(/orgs/housing-court\)](/orgs/housing-court)

Land Court (/orgs/land-court)

The Land Court hears a wide range of cases involving real estate and land use, and oversees the Commonwealth's system for the registration of title to real property.

[More \(/orgs/land-court\)](/orgs/land-court)



Massachusetts Court System (/orgs/massachusetts-court-system)

The Massachusetts court system consists of the Supreme Judicial Court, the Appeals Court, the Executive Office of the Trial Court, the 7 Trial Court departments, the Massachusetts Probation

Service, and the Office of Jury Commissioner.

[More](#) (/orgs/massachusetts-court-system)



[Massachusetts Probation Service](#) (/orgs/massachusetts-probation-service)

MPS's main goal is to keep communities safe and to provide people on probation with the rehabilitative tools they need to live a productive and law-abiding life.

Effective Monday, July 20, 2020, the Office of the Commissioner of Probation will be open to the public by appointment only. If you wish to make an appointment or speak with someone regarding sealing or expunging a record or have questions for the Records Unit, please call (617) 557-0225.

[More](#) (/orgs/massachusetts-probation-service)

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[Court system response to COVID-19](#)

(<https://www.mass.gov/resource/court-system-response-to-covid-19>)