

PRESS RELEASE

# Supreme Judicial Court Issues Order Regarding State Court Operations in June During the Pandemic

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Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court

Appeals Court

Executive Office of the Trial Court

Massachusetts Court System

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**BOSTON, MA** — The Supreme Judicial Court today [issued an order](#) (</supreme-judicial-court-rules/supreme-judicial-court-second-updated-order-regarding-court-operations>) regarding the operation of Massachusetts state courts and courthouses in June during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The order will go into effect June 1, 2020, and replace the current order which went into effect May 4, 2020. A [comparison of the key provisions of the two orders](#) (</doc/comparison-of-supreme-judicial-courts-june-1-and-may-4-covid-19-orders>) is available on the court's website.

Under the new order, all the courts of the Commonwealth will continue to be open to conduct emergency and non-emergency business, in both civil and criminal cases, but court buildings will remain physically closed to the general public. All court business will be conducted virtually (by telephone, videoconference, email, or comparable means, or through the electronic filing system) until at least July 1. Exceptions will continue to be made for emergency matters that cannot be addressed virtually.

"The court system is open and conducting business virtually, with Trial Court departments increasingly addressing non-emergency matters that can be handled remotely," said Supreme Judicial Court Chief Justice Ralph Gants. "We will physically open courthouses to the public only when we are confident that we have protocols in place that will allow court users and court personnel to both be safe and feel safe, and even then we will open only in stages, focusing first on those matters that can only be addressed in person. Because we will need to conduct most court business virtually even after we physically reopen, we will devote our energies in June to improving our ability to do so, and to increasing the number and range of matters that can be resolved without the need for anyone physically to appear in court."

Jury trials in both criminal and civil cases in state courts are postponed to a date no earlier than September 8, 2020. Civil bench trials are postponed until at least July 1, unless a judge determines that a bench trial may be conducted virtually. Criminal bench trials are postponed until at least July 1, unless the parties and judge agree that the trial may be conducted virtually.

Under the prior updated order, each Trial Court department identified categories of non-emergency matters that it is addressing virtually. Under the new order, each department will identify any additional categories of non-emergency matters that it will attempt to address. It also directs departments to provide guidance to the public on how filings can be accomplished. This information will be posted on the courts' COVID-19 webpage.

The new order also ends the tolling of civil statutes of limitations on June 30, 2020. The tolling of criminal statutes of limitation will end on September 1, 2020. The tolling of other deadlines generally will end on July 1, 2020.

The Supreme Judicial Court today also [issued an order that authorizes the taking of remote depositions](/supreme-judicial-court-rules/supreme-judicial-court-order-regarding-remote-depositions) in civil cases without agreement of the parties or court approval.

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 [Judiciary's COVID-19 webpage](/resource/court-system-response-to-covid-19).

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

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