

EMERGENCY ALERTS

## Coronavirus Update

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PRESS RELEASE

# Supreme Judicial Court Issues New Order On Court Operations and Reopening Courthouses

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

6/24/2020

Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court

Appeals Court

Executive Office of the Trial Court

Boston Municipal Court

District Court

Probate and Family Court

Juvenile Court

Housing Court

Land Court

Massachusetts Court System

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**BOSTON, MA** — The Supreme Judicial Court today [issued an updated order](#) (</supreme-judicial-court-rules/supreme-judicial-court-third-updated-order-regarding-court-operations>) regarding the operation of Massachusetts state courts and courthouses during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The order will go into effect July 1, 2020. A summary of the key provisions of the new order can be viewed [here](#) (</doc/summary-of-key-provisions-in-supreme-judicial-courts-july-1-2020-covid-19-order>).

Under the new order, courthouses will physically reopen to the public for limited purposes, including some in-person proceedings, on July 13, 2020, but courts will continue to conduct most business virtually. The number of in-person proceedings will further expand during a second phase beginning on August 10, 2020. In advance of each phase, the Trial Court departments will identify the new matters they will be addressing in person on the [court system's COVID-19 webpage](#) (</resource/court-system-response-to-covid-19>).

Until July 13, clerks', registers', and recorder's offices will continue to conduct business virtually, except in certain emergency situations. Beginning on July 13, all of these offices will physically reopen to the public, while still endeavoring to conduct business virtually as much as possible.

When courthouses reopen on July 13, entry will be limited to persons attending in-person proceedings, persons conducting business with a clerk's, register's, or recorder's office, persons meeting with probation, and persons conducting business at other open offices in the courthouses. Persons seeking to enter will be screened to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Beginning on July 13, cell phones will be permitted in all courthouses, subject to compliance with certain rules set forth in a new Trial Court policy ([Trial Court Emergency Administrative Order 20-10](#) (</trial-court-rules/trial-court-emergency-administrative-order-20-10-order-concerning-trial-court>)). The new policy will be posted on the court system's COVID-19 webpage and at the entrance to each courthouse.

Jury trials in both criminal and civil cases in state courts continue to be postponed to a date no earlier than September 8, 2020. Starting July 13, judges may begin to schedule civil and criminal bench trials. No new grand jury can be empaneled prior to September 8, unless the Supreme Judicial Court so orders. Existing grand juries are extended until the date of that new empanelment or the date of the October 2020 empanelment in the relevant judicial district, whichever occurs first.

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](#) (</resource/court-system-response-to-covid-19>).

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### **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)

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### **Appeals Court** (/orgs/appeals-court)

The Appeals Court is the Commonwealth's intermediate appellate court.

**More** (/orgs/appeals-court)

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### **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)

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### **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)

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### **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)

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### **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 \(/orgs/probate-and-family-court\)](#)

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### **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 \(/orgs/juvenile-court\)](#)

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### **Housing Court** (/orgs/housing-court)

Currently all non-emergency cases will be scheduled for, or continued to, a date no earlier than May. Parties will receive notice of rescheduled cases, but plaintiffs are advised to alert all parties of the scheduling change. Each Clerk-Magistrate, in consultation with the First Justice, has the discretion in his/her respective division to determine if an event is considered an emergency. If you need further assistance please refer to the department's list of Hotline numbers relevant to the department such as the Clerk's Office, Tenancy Preservation Program and Legal Services. This list can be accessed below under 'What would you like to do?'

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

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### **Land Court** (/orgs/land-court)

The Land Court oversees land registration, hears cases involving decisions by local planning boards and zoning boards of appeal, and handles most other property matters. It also has superintendence authority over the registered land offices in each Registry of Deeds. There are 7 Land Court justices, including Chief Justice Gordon H. Piper.

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

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## **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>)

### RELATED

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**Court system response to COVID-19** (</resource/court-system-response-to-covid-19>)