

To: Corey Steel, State Court Administrator

From: District Court Judges, George A. Thompson, Presiding Judge, Second Judicial District

Re: Novel Coronavirus, COVID-19 disease response plan

Pursuant to the Administrative Order of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court filed August 9, 2021, the following uniform plan is adopted, and shall be reviewed and amended from time to time in the event the State of Nebraska declares a state emergency:

1. District judges will maintain ongoing communication with the Sarpy/Cass Health Department seeking input and feedback for mitigating efforts that may be recommended and/or directed concerning the district courtrooms, the district court clerk's office space, and jury rooms utilized by the district court. Adjustments will be considered as recommended by the health department consistent with the law.

2. District judges will maintain ongoing communication with local government officials in order to assure that any government entity which imposes statutory, rule, or ordinance measures requiring mitigating efforts to slow the spread of Covid-19 are evaluated and implemented when and where such mitigating efforts apply to county courtrooms, court clerk's office spaces, jury rooms.

3. District judges shall post a copy of the August 9, 2021, Administrative Order outside the District Court Courtrooms.

4. All reasonable efforts will be made to limit the number of hearings scheduled on particular days and times which may include but not be limited to resetting hearings and using video and audio equipment in accordance with Neb. Rev. Stat. §24-303. Under the direction of Sarpy/Cass Health Department and local government officials, this may include promoting social distancing in courtrooms, clerk's office spaces, and jury rooms.

5. District judges will maintain ongoing communication with the jury commissioner to assure the availability of jurors and, when and wherever possible, coordinate efforts between courts to reduce the number of jury trials taking place during each panel.

6. District judges will seek permission from the AOCB and the Sarpy County Board to permit State and County staff to work off site and to alter their work schedules to limit the number of staff

present each day within the courthouse in the event that the number of Covid-19 positive tests rise in the District.

7. District judges will seek permission from the AOCB and the Sarpy County Board to permit employees who are exposed to COVID-19 and under quarantine to be paid consistent with allowances which each respectively endorsed in the early stages of the pandemic. Such efforts will promote health transparency and discourage staff from coming to work or not get paid.

8. Consistent with the directives of the local health director, the district judges will adapt to ongoing circumstances which may develop including promoting the use of masks, gloves, and face shields by courtroom attendees, use of sanitizing gel, and sharing of electronic video and audio capabilities.

9. District judges will maintain ongoing communication with attorneys' offices both in and outside the courthouse to keep abreast of changes in staffing within their respective offices and their ability to attend hearings.

10. District judges will continue ongoing communication with local jail officials and coordinate efforts to limit the number of inmates being brought into the courthouse facility for hearings.

11. District judges will continue to communicate with pre-trial release, probation, courthouse security and other parties who have regular business with the county courts to evaluate when, where and how best to conduct court proceedings.

12. District judges will maintain open and ongoing communication with the County and Juvenile judges and staff to assure the best use of spacing of people, scheduling of hearings and meetings and use of video/audio equipment.

13. The District judges recognize the highest priority remains keeping the courts open and safe. In furtherance of this effort, the judges will encourage patience, flexibility and respect for the personal impact this disease is having on fellow co-workers and the public as we continue to adapt to these unprecedented circumstances.

Respectfully submitted this 11th day of August 2021,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George A. Thompson", written over a horizontal line.

George A. Thompson, Presiding Judge Second Judicial District