

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF CLEVELAND
COUNTY OF LINCOLN

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION
DISTRICT COURT DIVISION
JUDICIAL DISTRICT 27B

Cleveland County Record No. 21-R-177

Lincoln County Record No. 21-R-42

IN RE: CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19))
)
Joint District and Superior Court)
Administrative Order Regarding)
Screening, Facial Coverings, Social)
Distancing and Sanitization/PPE)
in Judicial District 27B Court Facilities)
_____)

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER
CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

THIS ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER is being entered to ensure the fair and proper administration of justice and to mitigate the public health threat posed by the Coronavirus (COVID-19). The undersigned enter this Administrative Order pursuant to the inherent authority of the court and pursuant to their administrative supervision and authority over the operation of the Superior Courts and District Courts under NCGS 70-41.1 and NCGS 7A-146 as Senior Resident Superior Court Judge and Chief District Court Judge respectively for Judicial District 27B of North Carolina.

WHEREAS the Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease that can result in serious illness or death by the SARS-CoV-2 virus which is a new strain of Coronavirus (COVID-19) that can be spread from person to person; and

WHEREAS the Governor of North Carolina, on March 10, 2020, by Executive Order declared a state of emergency to coordinate response and protective actions to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19); and

WHEREAS the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court, by Order dated March 13, 2020 and subsequent Emergency Orders and Directives thereafter, determined, pursuant to NCGS 7A-39(b)(2), that catastrophic conditions resulting from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreaks have existed in all counties of this State; and

WHEREAS on May 14, 2021, the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court eliminated Emergency Directive 21 that pertains to facial coverings in court facilities and instead leaves that decision to the informed discretion of local court officials; and

WHEREAS on May 14, 2021, the Governor of the State of North Carolina, in Executive Order No. 215, fully lifted the indoor facial covering requirement on most businesses and operations in North Carolina; and

WHEREAS based upon the foregoing and in the totality of these circumstances, the undersigned have determined that at this time facial covering and social distancing requirements in local judicial facilities should be as follows:

WHEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that:

1. SCREENING

- a) No person shall enter Cleveland County Courthouse and Lincoln County Courthouse facilities if:
 - i. They are sick or are experiencing any symptom of COVID-19.
 - ii. They are a known and direct contact to a positive COVID-19 test.
 - iii. They are awaiting test results from a rapid and/or PCR COVID-29 test.
 - iv. They are required to be in quarantine according to local health official and CDC guidelines.
- b) Such screening shall be accomplished primarily through the posting of appropriate signage at each entrance to the building, but security personnel may also exercise discretion to engage in verbal reminders and verbal inquiries to persons entering the building.

2. FACIAL COVERINGS

- a) Effective immediately and upon the entry of this order, facial coverings are now required of any person entering Cleveland County Courthouse and Lincoln County Courthouse facilities regardless of vaccination status.
- b) Facial coverings will be required in all public areas, hallways, offices and courtrooms of said court facilities. Any person(s) entering court facilities who do not have a facial covering will be provided a mask prior to entry.
- c) This facial covering requirement includes all court personnel, law enforcement, jurors attorneys and the public who enter court facilities to conduct court business.

- d) Court personnel will not be required to wear face coverings while seated at required workstations and not in close contact with other persons, but will be expected to wear a face covering when moving from that workstation or upon being in close contact with other persons.
- e) Any person(s) serving as a juror or are called as a witness to a case may remove face coverings while being examined by counsel or as directed by a presiding judge.

3. SOCIAL DISTANCING

- a) Effective immediately and upon the entry of this order, intervals of at least six (6) feet in every direction in all public areas are marked with tape or other visible markers.
- b) The maximum allowable occupancy of each courtroom, meeting space and office shall be established so that all persons who must sit or stand in such space may observe social distancing of at least six (6) feet in every direction.
- c) The establishment of maximum occupancy shall be prominently posted at the entrances to each courtroom or meeting space. Social distancing numbers for each courtroom shall be posted on each bench as well as outside the entry points of each courtroom in both counties. Posted social distancing numbers are applicable to the areas of the public only, they do not include the bench or areas of the Clerk of Court in each courtroom.
- d) Maximum social distancing capacity numbers in each court facility are as follows:

CLEVELAND COUNTY COURTHOUSE

- **Courtroom 1** – 18 Maximum Seating Occupancy
- **Courtroom 2** – 34 Maximum Seating Occupancy
- **Courtroom 3** – 12 Maximum Seating Occupancy
- **Courtroom 4** – 21 Maximum Seating Occupancy
- **Courtroom 5** – 35 Maximum Seating Occupancy
- **Courtroom 6** – 14 Maximum Seating Occupancy
- **Small Claims Hearing Room** – 11 Maximum Seating Occupancy
- **Designated Public Areas** – 60 Maximum Occupancy

(Public Areas are inclusive of the front entrance of the courthouse/lobby/security screening area, cashier waiting and stairwell area, hall and lobby area to the Clerk of Superior Court – Criminal Division window and the public Courtroom entrance hall.)

LINCOLN COUNTY COURTHOUSE

- **Courtroom 1** – 12 Maximum Seating Occupancy
- **Courtroom 2** – 10 Maximum Seating Occupancy
- **Courtroom 3** – 10 Maximum Seating Occupancy
- **Small Claims Hearing Room** – 6 Maximum Seating Occupancy
- **3rd Floor Hearing Room** – 8 Maximum Seating Occupancy
- **Designated Public Areas** – 45 Maximum Occupancy

(Public Areas are inclusive of at most, eight (8) maximum persons in the main lobby of the first floor, twelve (12) maximum persons of the hallway on the second floor and four (4) maximum persons of the hallway on the third floor.)

- e) All published court calendars shall reflect the social distancing numbers and requirements as set out in section 3(d) of this order.
- f) Control of those populations will rest in the discretion the Sheriff who is authorized to enforce social distancing in all courtrooms and common areas of all court facilities as specified in this order. The Sheriff of each county shall limit the entry of the number of persons entering each court facility and courtroom(s) based upon the social distancing numbers listed in paragraph 3(d) of this order.

4. SANITIZATION / PPE

- a) Hand sanitizer shall, at a minimum, be available at the entry and exit of the facility and, preferably, at all high touch areas of the facility including doorways, services counters, stairwells and elevators.
- b) Any person(s) entering the Cleveland County Courthouse and Lincoln County Courthouse will be required to use hand sanitizer prior to entry and prior to conducting any court business within the facility. This requirement pertains to the same and all person(s) listed in section 1(c) of this order.
- c) All areas accessed by the public shall be cleaned daily with high touch surface areas cleaned periodically throughout the day.
- d) Any person(s) entering court facilities who do not have a facial covering will be provided a mask prior to entry.

This administrative order pertains to screening, facial coverings, social distancing and sanitization/PPE in all courthouse facilities within Judicial District 27B. This administrative order HEREBY supersedes any previously implemented policies regarding the same. The requirements of this order shall be effective immediately upon the entry of this order and shall not expire until further order of the undersigned. This Order is enforceable through the contempt powers of the District and Superior Courts.

This the 13th day of August, 2021.

eCOPY

/s/ Forrest D. Bridges
Senior Resident Superior Court Judge
Judicial District 27B

eCOPY

/s/ Jeannette R. Reeves
Chief District Court Judge
Judicial District 27B