

JD R 086

FILED

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
JUDICIAL DISTRICT 26

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE

2020 JUN -1 P 1:48

MECKLENBURG COUNTY MECKLENBURG CO., C.S.C.

IN RE:

BY \_\_\_\_\_

**COURT RULES NECESSARY TO  
PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
SLOW THE SPREAD OF COVID-19  
IN THE MECKLENBURG COUNTY  
COURTHOUSE**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER**

THIS ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER has been entered to ensure the fair and proper administration of justice and to mitigate the public health threat posed by COVID-19 within the Mecklenburg County Courthouse. The undersigned Senior Resident Superior Court Judge and Chief District Court Judge enter this Administrative Order pursuant to the inherent authority of the court and pursuant to its administrative supervision and authority over the operation of the Superior and District Courts in the 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 7A-41.1, 7A-146. This Order is intended to address the unprecedented public health threat posed by COVID-19 to court staff, the Bar and the public who have business in the Mecklenburg County Courthouse.

Whereas, COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that can result in serious illness or death by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which is a new, highly-contagious strain of coronavirus that can be spread from person to person; and

Whereas, the Mecklenburg County Health Director has advised the Key Court Officials of the 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District that limiting courthouse traffic, enforcement of six-foot social distancing, and promoting the use of face coverings during in-court proceedings are necessary measures to prevent or slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus in Mecklenburg County; and

Whereas, Governor Roy Cooper declared a State of Emergency in North Carolina on March 10, 2020, in response to the emerging public health threat posed by COVID-19 by entry of Executive Order No. 116, *Declaration of a State of Emergency to Coordinate Response and Protective Actions to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19*; and

Whereas, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic on March 11, 2020; and

Whereas, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) has warned of the extreme public threat posed by COVID-19 globally and in the United States and strongly recommended the practice of social distancing and the use of face coverings to deter the spread of the virus; and

Whereas, Governor Roy Cooper issued Executive Order No. 117, *Prohibiting Mass Gatherings and Directing the Statewide Closure of K-12 Public Schools to limit the spread of COVID-19*, on March 14, 2020, as a means to protect the health and safety of the residents of North Carolina, slow the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak, reduce the number of people infected, and avoid strain on our health care system; and

Whereas, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina on May 21, 2020 declaring that catastrophic conditions exist in all North Carolina counties, issued directives pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 7A-39(b)(2) to limit the spread of infection while continuing operation for essential court functions, directing local districts to restrict traffic in courthouse facilities, implementing social distancing practices, and implementing cleaning and sanitizing practices; and

Whereas, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina has made expansion of in-person court proceedings contingent on the implementation of practices recommended by public health officials as necessary to the safe operation of the courts; and

Whereas, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina has issued directives to limit face-to-face interactions between staff and the public and further specified the use of a secure receptacle to accept filings; and

Whereas, it is in keeping with the Governor's Executive Order and the Order of the Chief Justice for the court to establish standards for the use of face coverings within the Mecklenburg County Courthouse, enforce social distancing standards and limit attendees to in-person court hearings to those essential or necessary to the proceedings.

WHEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED ADJUDGED AND DECREED that effective immediately and until July 6, 2020:

1. All persons who enter the Mecklenburg County Courthouse shall practice social distancing by maintaining a distance of at least six feet from any other person. Willful failure to comply with social distancing mandates can result in exclusion from the facility or contempt proceedings consistent with N.C.G.S Chapter 5A; and

2. All attorneys and other members of the general public able to medically tolerate a face-covering should wear a face-covering within the indoor public spaces of the Mecklenburg County Courthouse; and
3. All persons inside a courtroom, including courtroom personnel, should wear a face-covering. Any person who is unable or refuses to wear a face-covering while participating in a court hearing, may be permitted to remain so long as he or she can remain six feet from any other person in the courtroom.
4. All persons seeking to file legal documents should submit their filings using the secure receptacle designated by the Clerk of Superior Court. If you are a legal professional or filing on behalf of another, you are required to deposit your documents in the receptacle.

Entered and effective, this the 1<sup>st</sup> day of June, 2020.



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The Honorable William R. Bell  
Senior Resident Superior Court Judge



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The Honorable Elizabeth Trosch  
Chief District Court Judge