

JURY SERVICE DURING COVID-19

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



10th Judicial District: Wake County Jury Service

Why are the courts summoning jurors when the virus is still going around and there is no cure?

Jury service is one of the cornerstones of our system of justice, expressly provided for in the U.S. Constitution and North Carolina Constitution. The Court has an obligation to uphold the constitutional rights of the citizens of this state, which includes the right to a jury trial.

We are making every effort to take the necessary steps to keep reporting jurors safe while still protecting the rights of individuals and providing meaningful access to the courts.

What safety precautions are being taken at the courthouse to protect jurors?

Chief Justice Beasley directed each county and / or district to create a Jury Trial Resumption Plan prior to issuing juror summonses for trial. The plan ensures that court operations comply with each of the emergency directives that the Chief Justice has issued and must be informed by the Judicial Branch COVID-19 Task Force Best Safety Practices as set forth in [NCAOC's COVID-19 Field Guidance](#).

The [Tenth Judicial District Jury Trial Resumption Plan](#) includes safety practices such as:

- A confirmation that each court facility and any alternate facility to be used for court operations follows each of the Chief Justice's emergency orders in response to the COVID-19 outbreak;
- A plan for conducting jury selection and trials with social distancing in the courtroom and in the deliberation room;
- A plan for daily screening of jurors, court personnel, attorneys, witnesses, and parties for COVID-19; and
- A plan for responding in the event that a juror, defendant, attorney, witness, judge, or other courtroom personnel becomes symptomatic, tests positive for COVID-19, or has a known exposure to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 during the trial.

Pursuant to the [Tenth Judicial District COVID-19 Public Safety Policies](#), all persons who are in a court facility are required to wear a face covering while they are in common areas or when interacting with others. Steps are being taken to clean facilities frequently according to CDC guidelines and to create an environment conducive to social distancing. Wake County has installed plexiglass to serve as a barrier and is taking temperatures of anyone who enters the court facility.

Notices are posted at the entrance to each court facility directing that any person who has likely been exposed to COVID-19 should not enter the courthouse. Attorneys and other persons who do not have business in a courthouse should not enter a courthouse, and those who do have business in a courthouse should not prolong their visit once their business has concluded.

Visit the [Wake County COVID-19 Updates page](#) to view local orders and local information regarding specific procedures. See the [Judicial Branch COVID-19 page](#) for more information and emergency directives.



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I am considered a high-risk individual for COVID-19 and I have been summoned for jury service. Do I have to appear?

Please follow the directions on the front of the summons regarding requests to be excused/deferred from jury service for COVID-19 related reasons for deferral. COVID-19 related reasons for deferral are explained on the safety information page included with the jury summons.

I live with a person / I am a caretaker for a person who is a high-risk individual for COVID-19 and I have been summoned for jury service. Do I have to appear?

Please follow the directions on the front of the summons regarding requests to be excused/deferred from jury service for COVID-19 related reasons for deferral. COVID-19 related reasons for deferral are explained on the safety information page included with the jury summons.

Will a mask be provided if I do not have one?

Yes. Face masks are available from the security screening stations at the entrances of the Wake County Courthouse and the Wake County Justice Center. Upon arriving at the jury lounge, you will also be provided with an extra mask. If you need additional face coverings during your jury service, please inform the nearest court official (e.g., clerk, bailiff).

May I bring food and drink with me?

Yes, but to avoid creating "high touch" areas that increase exposure to COVID-19, no storage areas, refrigerators, or microwaves will be available for juror use. You will have to carry all food, drink, and other personal items with you during your jury service, as you will not be permitted to return to the jury lounge once you have been called to a courtroom.

Do I have to swear on a holy book when I take my juror oath?

Due to COVID-19 safety concerns, the juror oath will be administered to you by affirmation. However, if you want to swear on a holy book, then you must bring your own personal copy of the holy book upon which you wish to be sworn.



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What should I do if I have safety concerns, become ill, or have close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual after I receive the Jury Summons or while serving on a jury?

Do not appear at the courthouse to report your symptoms or exposure. If this occurs more than a week prior to the date of your jury service, you should follow the directions on the front of the summons so you can request to be excused / deferred from jury service.

If this occurs within the week prior to the date of your jury service or anytime thereafter when you are not at a judicial facility but while serving on a jury, you must contact the Wake County Court COVID-19 hotline to advise the Court of your situation. *Do not appear at the courthouse to report your symptoms or exposure.* The hotline can be reached by telephone, (919) 792-4242, or by e-mail, WakeCourtHotLine@nccourts.org. Please leave your name, juror number, date of jury service, and the telephone number at which you can be reached along with the reason you cannot come to court.

What should I do if I have concerns about the safety measures in the courthouse or if I feel safety precautions are not being followed?

If at any time during your jury service you are concerned about your health or safety due to a lack of safety measures or because guidelines are not being followed (e.g., social distancing is not being practiced, there is no hand sanitizer at the courthouse entrance), please bring your concerns to the attention of the judge, the clerk, or the bailiff to be addressed.

