

JURY SERVICE DURING COVID-19

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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?

Safety precautions may vary by courthouse / facility. Steps are being taken to clean facilities frequently according to CDC guidelines and to create an environment conducive to social distancing. Court staff is encouraged to wear masks and wash hands frequently. Some courthouses are taking temperatures and requiring the public to wear a cloth face covering. Plexiglass has been installed in some courthouses to serve as a barrier. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina has directed that hand sanitizer be made available, at a minimum, at all entrances to court facilities. Jury selection and / or trials may be held in a different location if the courthouse or courtroom cannot safely accommodate social distancing for jurors.

Notices have been 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. Attorneys are strongly encouraged to submit filings by mail rather than in person.

Visit your [county's page](#) to view any local orders regarding specific procedures, such as required face coverings. See the [Judicial Branch COVID-19 page](#) for more information and emergency directives. There may also be local city or county government orders in place that require face coverings.



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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?

Contact the [jury coordinator](#) in your county for juror excuse policy information.

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?

Contact the [jury coordinator](#) in your county for juror excuse policy information.

Do I have to wear a mask at the courthouse?

Some courthouses may require you to wear a mask or cloth face covering before being allowed to enter.

Visit your [county's page](#) to view any local orders regarding specific procedures, such as required face coverings. There may also be local city or county government orders in place that require face coverings.

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

Visit your [county's page](#) to view any local orders regarding specific procedures, such as required face coverings and the availability of masks if you appear without a mask.

Do I need to bring my own hand sanitizer?

The Chief Justice has directed that hand sanitizer be made available, at a minimum, at all entrances to court facilities. Please be aware security policies may prevent you from entering the courthouse if you have your own sanitizer. Please check with the [local facility](#) before appearing for court.



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If I am selected, how will the jury pool be seated to ensure social distancing?

Every effort will be made to practice social distancing in the jury pool and jury box. In addition to other protective measures, the Chief Justice has ordered that spaces where the public and jurors will congregate be marked at intervals of 6 feet to ensure social distancing.

Jury selection and / or trials may be held in a different location if the courthouse or courtroom cannot safely accommodate social distancing for jurors.

If selected for a jury, will jurors be seated in a small room to deliberate?

Every effort will be made to practice social distancing during jury trials and deliberations. The Chief Justice created a COVID-19 Task Force that has developed guidelines and best practices for the conduct of in-person court proceedings in compliance with current public health guidance. The Chief Justice also ordered that each court facility designate a COVID-19 Coordinator who is directed to determine whether there is adequate space in the court facility to convene a jury trial in keeping with current public health guidance.

In making this determination, the COVID-19 Coordinator will take into account the need for the jury to observe social distancing, as well as for jurors to be socially distanced in the courtroom and any deliberation room.

The COVID-19 Coordinator is encouraged to consult with the local public health director, or their designee, in making this determination where possible. Jury selection and / or trials may be held in a different location if the courthouse or courtroom cannot safely accommodate social distancing for jurors. If you have additional questions, check with the [local facility](#) before appearing for court.



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How long will the trial last?

This will vary by the policies established by each county's COVID-19 Coordinator in collaboration with local court leadership. Courts have been encouraged to limit the trial duration and to prioritize less complex trials that will require less time to hear in order to shorten the time a juror must appear.

How long will I be in court each day?

This will vary by the policies established by each county's COVID-19 Coordinator in collaboration with local court leadership.

What should I do if I am experiencing COVID-19 symptoms prior to my jury service date?

Do not appear at the courthouse to report your symptoms. If you begin experiencing COVID-19 symptoms prior to your jury service date, please inform the jury coordinator in your county by phone.

What should I do if I experience COVID-19 symptoms during my jury service?

If you begin experiencing COVID-19 symptoms during your period of jury service while at the court facility, please inform the nearest court employee (e.g., clerk, bailiff).

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.

