



Berrien County Trial Court

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PRESS RELEASE

Berrien County Trial Court Moves to Phase 4

In accordance with the Michigan Supreme Court's Return to Full Capacity Guide as updated June 21, 2021, all Michigan courts have been moved to Phase 4 of re-opening guidelines. In coordination between the Chief Judge and the Berrien County Health Department, the Berrien County Trial Court will thus be updating operations effective July 1, 2021.

Pursuant to the recommendations of the Berrien County Health Department, the courthouse buildings will be open to the public. Public entering the courthouse facilities will be asked to self-screen for COVID symptoms and not enter the facilities if experiencing said symptoms. Masks are strongly encouraged for any members of the public not fully vaccinated from COVID-19, specifically when sitting in the gallery of the courtrooms. Members of the public will no longer be required to check-in with court staff prior to entry into the courthouses. The COVID-19 video request protocol is discontinued as public access to the courthouses is broadened.

Jurors will continue to be required to socially distance during jury trials (including during juror selection) and are strongly encouraged to wear a face covering if unvaccinated. Jurors will also complete a daily health screening with court staff prior to accessing the facilities. Due to continued social distancing, jury trials will continue to be closed to the general public but will be livestreamed to the court's YouTube channel.

Several types of court proceedings will return to being conducted in-person, while many proceeding types will continue to be held remotely via Zoom. A detailed listing of hearing types and how they will be scheduled are available at the Trial Court's website. Regardless of method of engagement, all participants – remote or in-person – must follow Berrien County Trial Court Administrative Order 2013-02 "Courthouse Decorum" when engaged in a court proceeding or the presiding judicial officer may have that individual removed from the proceeding.

The Berrien County Juvenile Center will continue to operate under the appropriate COVID-19 protocols as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control as a congregate care facility. In-person visits with juveniles will now be allowed, with members of the public required to complete a health screening and wear a face covering while in the facility.

This guidance from the Berrien County Health Department comes at this time due to low community spread, stable to decreasing percent positivity, and good capacity for healthcare delivery and treatment. Should community conditions change, changes may be required at all operational levels particularly while the court remains in Phase 4 of the Return to Full Capacity Guide.

A detailed listing of services returning to in-person accessibility as well as those services which will remain remote can be found at the Trial Court's website at <http://berriencounty.org/1058/Trial-Court>.