



Pam Vergara
CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE
FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT of FLORIDA
Hernando County Courthouse
Room 335
20 N. Main Street
Brooksville, FL 34601

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER REGARDING COURTROOM SAFETY
GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE HONORABLE PAM VERGARA
CIRCUIT CIVIL DIVISION**

Effective Jan. 5th, 2021

In order to ensure the safety of those required to be in the courtroom during the COVID-19 pandemic, the following restrictions apply:

1. Limitations on Visitors: Subject to paragraph 3, only the following visitors are permitted to enter the courtroom: 1) persons whose presence is essential to a proceeding (attorneys, litigants, court reporters, court interpreters, witnesses, etc.) and 2) members of the media.
2. Masks/Face Coverings: All persons entering the courtroom shall wear a mask or facial covering and continue to wear masks while in any common area of the

courtroom. Masks must remain on inside of the courtroom. In the event a party or attorney appearing in a courtroom fails to wear a mask, the presiding judge, in his or her discretion, may reset the matter.

a. Mask/Face Covering Policy

Pursuant to Administrative Order A-2020-12, as amended: "Face coverings are required for everyone entering the courthouse building, with no exceptions. Face coverings shall be worn at all times throughout the public areas of the courthouse building, including inside the courtroom." It further provides, "If visitors do not have a face covering, one should be provided to them at no cost." See FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA COVID-19 Public Health and Safety Operational Plan: Phase 2 for additional details.

Criminal Defense attorneys, including the Public Defender and ORCC, are responsible for ensuring that their out-of-custody clients and staff appear at the courthouse with a mask or facial covering. The Sheriff is responsible for ensuring that in-custody defendants appear in the courtroom with a mask or facial covering. The State Attorney is responsible for ensuring that their staff and any victims or witnesses subpoenaed by the State appear in the courtroom with a mask or facial covering. The Clerk is responsible for ensuring that any of its customers, including jurors, appear in the courtroom with a mask or facial covering.

3. Courtroom Limitations: The maximum amount of persons, including the judge court staff, attorneys and parties, etc., allowed in the courtroom at any given time is limited to eight (8) persons. Any hearing that requires more than eight (8) persons in the courtroom must be conducted remotely and such remote hearing shall be coordinated with the judicial assistant. Any scheduled hearing that does not meet the eight (8) person limit will be continued and arrangements for a remote hearing must then be made with the judicial assistant.

4. Social Distancing: All persons inside the courtroom must make every effort to stay at least six feet away from any other person.

5. Scheduling: In-person hearings exceeding the above criteria will be conducted separately so as to prevent crowding.

DONE AND ORDERED, in Chambers, Brooksville, Hernando County this 5th day of January, 2021.


Pam Vergara, Circuit Judge