

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
CHESTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

IN RE: ADDITIONAL COVID-19 SAFEGUARDS DURING SURGE IN HIGH
COVID-19 TRANSMISSION LEVELS

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 1-2022

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AND NOW, this 12th day of January, 2022, in consideration of the recent surge in high COVID-19 transmission levels within Chester County, apparently caused by the Omicron variant, and in order to better safeguard the public, jurors, court proceeding participants and court employees, it is hereby **ORDERED** and **DECREED** within the 15th Judicial District as follows:

1. During periods of high COVID-19 transmission levels in Chester County, all participants of non-jury proceedings in the court of common pleas and magisterial district courts, including lawyers, witnesses, parties, tipstaves, sheriff deputies, clerks, court reporters, judges and observing members of the public shall wear a face mask covering the nose and mouth. The common pleas judge, magisterial district judge or hearing officer presiding over non-jury proceedings shall be responsible for ensuring that the proceeding participants comply with this order, but shall retain the discretion to allow such participants to speak without masks as circumstances warrant, including witnesses during witness testimony.¹
2. A face mask covering the nose and mouth shall be worn by all persons, including members of the public and court employees, in any public interior building area occupied by a court department, common pleas court or magisterial district court, and any non-public interior building area where court employees may not adequately social distance from each other.
3. Jury trials, including jury selection, conducted by the court of common pleas shall be conducted only in large courtrooms 1 and 2 of the Chester County Justice Center and courtroom 1 of the Historic Courthouse during periods of high COVID-19 transmission levels in Chester County unless specifically authorized by the court administrator. In order to limit jury panels during this surge of COVID-19


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¹ For purposes of this order, transmission level shall be calculated by the Chester County Health Department.

transmissions, civil jury trials are temporarily suspended until Monday, February 28, 2022. Additionally, the criminal jury trial judges shall continue to use their best efforts during high COVID-19 transmission levels, and through at least February 28, 2022, to limit the use of criminal jury trials to those cases involving what the trial judges determine to be significant issues requiring trial priority, e.g., speedy trial implications, witness/scheduling issues, etc. In addition to their own inherent authority to do so, the criminal jury trial common pleas judges are hereby authorized to use a court postponement of any jury trial (excludable time for purposes of Pennsylvania Rule of Criminal Procedure 600) due to high COVID-19 transmission levels.

4. All court department heads, common pleas judges, magisterial district court judges and hearing officers shall continue to use all reasonable efforts to safeguard against COVID-19 contagion during periods of high COVID-19 transmission levels within Chester County, including requiring social distancing to separate the persons in a room/courtroom; staggering hearing/appointment times to reduce the numbers of persons in a room/courtroom and using advanced communication technology, where appropriate, to facilitate remote appearances.

BY THE COURT:



JOHN L. HALL, President Judge