

 CHIEF’S REPORT

Good afternoon,

I hope all is well with each of you. As I have stated previously, the coronavirus has impacted communities and our courts in a manner that has left many people feeling uneasy and a bit anxious (at best). However, we still must make every effort to continue to provide access to justice within the context of the recommended health and safety COVID-19 guidelines.

It has come to my attention that many of you would like to know more about the protocol regarding employees or attorneys that work in our courts. I would like you all to be aware that Superior Court Trial Court Administrator Amanda Leazer is the COVID-19 Coordinator for our county. She was appointed to this position by Senior Resident Superior Court Judge John O. Craig.

The Courts have secured or ordered the following to protect employees, attorneys and the general public:

* Disposable Masks -- We have hand sanitizer and 15,000 masks for the public.  We expect that these will last thru July or August of 2020.  They are being disseminated at the present time. We are going to hold back 500 masks for jurors.  The County is hopeful to get additional masks.  In addition, NC AOC has procured a large quantity masks for the courts.
* Administrative Order-- Judge Craig and I issued an administrative order requiring everyone to wear a mask unless there is a medical condition that would preclude them from wearing them (a medical note must be presented just indicating that they are unable to wear a mask --- not their medical diagnosis).  Either security or a deputy will be scanning employees and the public for elevated temperatures.
* Temperature --- The temperature limit will be 100.4.   The Health Department trained security and deputies in how to use the thermometers properly.  If an individual test high, the Health Department Director recommends that the individual wait five minutes before taking it again.  We are asking all attorneys to enter thru the main entrance (on the plaza level) in order to have their temperature taken.  Employees have been directed to enter the courthouse through UG level or a location designated by their supervisor to have their temperature taken prior to entry.
* The Director of the Health Department suggested that we ask pertinent questions about symptoms as well in order to be more cautious.  Security is already asking those questions and will continue to do so.
* Hand Sanitizer Stations – Hand Sanitizer Stations have been placed by each elevator.
* Plexiglass -- The County received requests for plexiglass in the courtrooms.  They are making them at the current time.  The County is also installing plexiglass for the jury boxes.  They will complete them for one courtroom first and upon approval they will complete the rest of them.
* Cleaning Courts -- The contract custodian is providing two people during the day to clean courts in high touch areas for courts that go into the afternoon.  They will clean all the courts in the evening.  The County is in the process of securing foggers to mist the courtroom.

If you have symptoms such as fever, loss of taste or smell, headaches or other COVID-19 symptoms, please seek testing and do NOT enter either courthouse until you have received negative test results. However, if you test positive, please contact Amanda Leazer immediately at (336) 414-2099 so that she can contact the Guilford County Health Department. The Health Department is responsible for contact tracing and will in turn contact individuals that should be tested due to close contact with the employee or individual that has tested positive. At the current time, we have had several employees that have tested positive. **Therefore, the courts referenced in the current Administrative Order are closed through Friday, July 24, 2020. If we are cleared by the Health Department, we will reopen on Monday with plans to implement additional measures to minimize a resurgence of the virus.** **The Clerk of Superior Court is going to modify the clerk’s schedules in response to an outbreak of COVID-19. Consequently, beginning on August 3, 2020, we will only have a civil clerk in the following courtrooms Monday through Friday until 1:00 pm: civil courtrooms 3A in Greensboro, 2E in Greensboro, 3B in High Point (Child Support) and 3B in Greensboro (if holding civil court).** **Courtroom 3A in High Point will continue to operate on a regular schedule on Mondays and for the monthly calendar call on Mondays at 2:00 pm, but will otherwise close at 1:00 pm Tuesday through Friday.** **Domestic Violence court (2B) in Greensboro will operate on a regular schedule Monday through Friday.**

The Courts have been instructed to follow the directives of the Health Department. Therefore, we cannot divulge who tested positive or any information that could easily identify the employee that tested positive due to HIPPA. We will notify court personnel when someone has tested positive for COVID. However, we will make every effort to adhere to the protocol issued by the Guilford County Health Department.

Thank you for your patience and understanding regarding the dilemma that we are faced with. Please see the attached files regarding COVID and COVID Protocols. Feel free to contact our office if you have any questions or comments.

I appreciate your time and attention. I hope and pray for your safety and well-being.

With Warm Regards,

Teresa H. Vincent

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Chief District Court Judge, 18th Judicial District