

Administrative Office of the Courts

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For Immediate Release

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Supreme Court of Kentucky lifts most COVID-19 restrictions for state court system, changes effective immediately

FRANKFORT, Ky., May 18, 2021 – Chief Justice Minton announced today that the state court system is ending most COVID-19 related restrictions. The news comes in the wake of the Centers for Disease Control’s [latest guidance](#) for fully vaccinated individuals.

“After the most challenging year in the history of the modern court system, I am pleased to announce that the Supreme Court has lifted most of the COVID-19 restrictions for employees, elected officials and those entering court facilities across the commonwealth,” Chief Justice of Kentucky John D. Minton Jr. announced today in an internal communication to justices, judges, circuit court clerks and court personnel. “I am grateful to all of you for the perseverance and commitment to safety that allows us to begin transitioning back to normal operations for the Kentucky Court of Justice.”

Today the Supreme Court entered two administrative orders that eliminate most of the health and safety requirements related to COVID-19 and further expand in-person court operations. [Administrative Order 2021-16](#) replaces Administrative Order 2021-06 in its entirety and [Administrative Order 2021-17](#) replaces Administrative Order 2021-07 in its entirety.

These changes are effective immediately and a brief summary of the orders can be found here:

[Administrative Order 2021-16](#), Response to COVID-19 Emergency: Health and Safety Requirements

- Allows in-person access to court facilities for any individual with business before the courts, except those who have symptoms of, have tested positive for, or have been exposed to COVID-19.

- Eliminates the mask requirement for fully vaccinated members of the public entering court facilities and fully vaccinated KCOJ elected officials and employees.
- Strongly encourages continued use of masks by members of the public and KCOJ elected officials and employees who are not fully vaccinated.
- Permits judges to require individuals in their courtrooms to wear masks and gives appointing authorities the ability to require the employees they supervise to wear masks in a specific office, courtroom or department.
- Encourages the continued use of remote technology for court proceedings and allows any individual with a scheduled remote hearing to appear remotely.
- Allows judges to conduct in-person court proceedings.
- Allows filings and payments to be made in-person at the local Office of Circuit Court Clerk.

Supreme Court Order 2021-17, Response to COVID-19 Emergency: Court Proceedings

- Lifts most restrictions on jury trials but requires continuances, postponements and recusals for attorneys, parties and jurors who are ill or at an increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
- Allows master commissioners to conduct judicial sales remotely or in person with no limitations.
- Retains the July 1, 2021, start date for show cause dockets for payments of fines and court costs.
- Suspends night traffic courts in Jefferson County until further notice.

Questions or concerns regarding these orders can be emailed to COVIDCourtConcerns@kycourts.net.

Supreme Court of Kentucky

The [Supreme Court](#) is the state court of last resort and the final interpreter of Kentucky law. Seven justices sit on the Supreme Court and all seven rule on appeals that come before the court. The justices are elected from seven appellate districts and serve eight-year terms. A chief justice, chosen for a four-year term by fellow justices, is the administrative head of the state's court system and is responsible for its operation. The Supreme Court may order a ruling or opinion to be published, which means that the ruling becomes the case law governing all similar cases in the future in Kentucky.

Administrative Office of the Courts

The [Administrative Office of the Courts](#) in Frankfort is the operations arm of the state court system. The AOC supports the activities of nearly 3,300 court system employees and 406 elected justices, judges and circuit court clerks. As the fiscal agent for the state court system, the AOC executes the Judicial Branch budget.

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