

STATE OF MICHIGAN



KALAMAZOO COUNTY COURTS

Alexander C. Lipsey,
Chief Circuit/Probate Judge
9th Circuit Court
150 E. Crosstown Parkway
Kalamazoo, MI 49001

Christopher T. Haenicke,
Chief District Judge
8th District Court
227 W. Michigan Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

PRESS RELEASE

DATE: September 14, 2020

TO: Kalamazoo County Citizens and Residents

FROM: Honorable Alexander C. Lipsey, Chief Judge of the 9th Circuit Court and Kalamazoo County Probate Court
Honorable Christopher T. Haenicke, Chief Judge of the 8th District Court

Subject: Your Courts are Working to Ensure the Health and Safety of Jurors

Since the first day of the COVID-19 Pandemic, all of the Courts in Kalamazoo County (the 8th District Court, the 9th Circuit Court, and the Kalamazoo County Probate Court), have been open and conducting business. Initially, almost all of the Court's activities happened through remote operations and virtual court proceedings.

Unfortunately, due to the nature of the Pandemic, we could not safely hold jury trials at the start of the Pandemic. Accordingly, the Courts suspended all jury trials in March of this year. However, beginning on the first day that we suspended jury trials, we began planning for how to safely resume those jury trials as soon as possible.

After much testing, planning, patience, work, and collaboration with the County Health Department, we are now ready to resume holding jury trials. Jury summons have been sent out citizens in Kalamazoo County and, last week, the District Court held its first jury trial since the start of the Pandemic.

Throughout our planning process, our top priority has been, and will continue to be, ensuring the health and safety of the jurors, judges, parties, witnesses, attorneys, and court staff, in the courthouses. We believe that it is important that our citizens know that the Courts has taken extra precautions and measures to provide everyone with a safe environment.

With guidance and recommendations from the Kalamazoo County Health and Human Services Department and the Michigan State Court Administrative Office, the Kalamazoo County Courts are enacting the following safety measures to promote a safe environment:

- Reducing the number of jurors summoned to report
- Staggering juror reporting times to minimize waiting room occupancy
- Implementing a check-in process to include no-contact exchange of documents and minimizing face-to-face interactions
- Moving jurors between waiting areas and courtrooms through contactless entries and exits
- Requiring the wearing of face masks while inside all courthouses
- Placing floor markings throughout the courthouse to maintain social distancing
- Re-arranging furniture to support social distancing including spacing in the jury waiting room, courtrooms and deliberation rooms
- Screening for Covid-19 symptoms including daily temperature checks and health screenings
- Cleaning and sanitizing common areas thoroughly and frequently after use
- Making hand sanitizer available throughout courthouse and providing disposable seat covers in jury waiting areas
- Installing plexi-shield partitions at check-in counters and in courtrooms to minimize face-to-face exposure

We also recognize that, even with these precautions, some citizens will be unable to appear for jury service because of their age, their underlying medical conditions, or other hardships caused by the pandemic. The Jury Services Department is prepared to grant excusals and postponements as necessary.

Chief Judge Lipsey, Chief Judge Haenicke, along with the Judges, Referees, and Court Staff, want you to know that we are committed to ensuring that the jury trials, as well as all other Court proceedings, are conducted safely.