

STATE OF MICHIGAN 63rd DISTRICT COURT KENT COUNTY

Hon. Jeffrey J. O'Hara
Chief Judge



Hon. Sara J. Smolenski
District Judge

PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Danielle Castillo, District Court Administrator
Phone: (616) 632-7770
E-Mail: danielle.castillo@kentcountymi.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

63rd District Court Advances to Phase Three; Adopts New Procedures for Court Users

KENT COUNTY – Effective Wednesday, June 16th, 2021, the 63rd District Court has satisfied the gating criteria and advanced to Phase Three pursuant to the State Court Administrative Office's [Return to Full Capacity Guide](#).

Beginning Monday, July 12, 2021, all criminal hearings held before Hon. Jeffrey J. O'Hara and Hon. Sara J. Smolenski will be held in person at the 63rd District Court unless previously approved. All in-person court users are expected to comply with the **63rd District Court Face Covering / Social Distancing Policy** (see below).

Most hearings scheduled to be heard before the magistrate and most civil case (general civil, summary proceedings, small claims) hearings will continue to be held virtually until further notice.

During this transition, court users are encouraged to carefully review their most recent hearing notice to determine the location of their hearing.

Beginning the week of Monday, August 9th, 2021, in-person criminal jury trials will resume. Jury summons will be mailed in the immediate future.

The 63rd District Court continues to be committed to reducing the risk of exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19 for all court users and court employees.

Any questions may be directed to the court at 616-632-7770 or DCCriminal@kentcountymi.gov.

63rd District Court Face Covering / Social Distancing Policy

The 63rd District Court adopts the following policies and procedures regarding face coverings/social distancing in accordance with updated guidance in the State Court Administrative Office "Return to Full Capacity Guide" and in alignment with the Kent County COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan.

Effective 6/8/2021, the 63rd District Court adopts the following policies for court users/visitors:

- All court users/visitors are required to wear face coverings and practice social distancing while inside the courthouse.
- Face coverings are not required where they cannot be medically tolerated, but social distancing will be implemented in such situations to enhance safety.
- At the discretion of the presiding judicial officer, face coverings may be removed by attorneys while speaking, jurors when they are asking questions, or for witnesses during testimony, where 6 feet social distancing is maintained, and where court attendees are wearing face coverings at all times.
- Face coverings are required for attorneys unless the presiding judicial officer determines that the attorney is inaudible and temporary removal of the face covering is necessary to facilitate the creation of an accurate record. The presiding judicial officer may allow the attorney to temporarily remove face coverings while speaking if 6 feet social distancing is maintained, and where court attendees are wearing face coverings.

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