Courthouse Operations Commencing June 1, 2020

The Dodge County Courts will be opening on June 1, 2020, for regular operations. We fully understand and will make every effort to employ Zoom and other technology to effectuate smooth operations and protect the safety of the users of the Court as well as the employees that run the Court. The Dodge County Courts believe that the Courts can be opened safely and that the Courts have an obligation to the users of the Court's services to open the doors and to provide complete service to the citizens of Dodge County that we are elected by and sworn to serve.

The Courts have worked with the courthouse staff, County Administration, the Sheriff's Office and Building Maintenance to come up with a comprehensive plan for safe operation during this difficult time. The Court also recognizes that even the most comprehensive look and examination of procedures will need to be altered and constantly evaluated once it is put into actual application. The Court is committed to safety and to being interactive with the staff and the end users to determine how their needs and concerns can be met.

Entry

Outside the doors of the Courthouse will be a sign that advises an individual of the following: 1. If you are experiencing any fever or other signs of COVID-19 type symptoms, you should not enter this building. Please call (920) 386-3570. 2. For the safety of all individuals, it is recommended that children and non-essential individuals not enter the building. 3. A mask or a face shield shall be worn on these premises. 4. Social distancing is required at all times when entering this building.

Upon coming into the Courthouse, the user will be asked by Court Security if they are having any health issues, fever or other COVID-19 type symptoms. If we are able secure a temporal thermometer, it will be used at this point to verify that the individual's temperature is within normal medical range. If a health issue is reported by the visitor, Court Security will determine the reason for their visit and will make every effort to determine if their purpose can be accomplished without further entry into the building. If no other method of dealing with the visitor's purpose for visit can be accomplished, refusal of entry will be enforced for the general protection of all users of the Courthouse.

The nature of all visitors' purpose for visit will be determined by Court Security in order to determine where the visitor needs to go and to limit the wandering through the building that may occur creating unnecessary additional safety risk.

Court Security will determine the necessity of any additional individuals that are accompanying the primary visitor. If the person is here for a court proceeding,

Court Security will allow the accompanying individuals to come into the building in recognition of and assuming that the hearing is open to the public.
If the visitor is at the Courthouse for filing or other non-court related matters, Court Security will make every effort to limit the number of individuals accompanying the user.

Every person will be offered a mask, face shield or allowed to wear a mask or face shield that they have brought with them. Masks or face shields will be required in all portions of the building. Masks or face shields will be required by all persons who are present in courtrooms, jury and other court related confined spaces unless a judge specifically determines on the record that it is necessary for a witness to not wear a face covering during the witness's testimony in order for the judge or jury to weigh the witness's credibility. Upon exiting the building, the individual will be asked to put the mask in a bin that will be designated for that purpose. Masks will be properly cleaned and disinfected before being returned to service. The Courts have procured approximately 400 masks and 200 face shields to offer to Courthouse visitors. We believe that most individuals who feel that a mask is an important part of their safety protocol will have their own mask.

Safety screening will be conducted in a manner that will limit both staff and user contact. It is understood that safety searches of an individual may necessitate close contact and it is understood that those searches will be conducted pursuant to professional guidelines and practices. Screening equipment employed will be disinfected on a regular basis throughout the day and at intervals that are consistent with the level of use. Disinfecting equipment and supplies will be available at the security station for this purpose. Periodic cleaning during the day will be conducted by security staff contemporaneous with need. The security station will be cleaned and disinfected twice a day by maintenance staff.

Clerk's Office

Individuals will be serviced at the clerks' windows. Limited windows will be available for customer service. The windows present a safety barrier for both the clerk and the visitor. Lines or marks six feet apart will be placed in the common area and outside the common area of the clerk's office to promote social distancing. In times of heavier use, the clerks will employ an additional clerk or a Court Security Officer to work outside the office to make sure that congestion does not occur in the common area of the clerk's office.

The common areas, including the countertops, will be cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day and more frequently if traffic is heavy. The clerk outside the clerk's office will have safety equipment available which will include gloves and a mask. The clerks will be required to maintain social distancing.

Gloves will be available to the clerks to wear in handling any documents they need to come into contact with.

Bathrooms

The common area bathrooms will remain open for use. The maintenance staff will clean the bathrooms at the beginning of each day and at least once during the day. If traffic in the Courthouse is particularly heavy, cleaning more often may be necessitated.

Halls and Common Areas

Chairs will be removed so that all chairs existing are six feet apart. Chairs will be cleaned and disinfected twice per day.

The number of conference rooms will be limited to reduce the areas that need to be cleaned and disinfected. There will be four conference rooms available on the second floor and two available on the first floor. Conference rooms will be cleaned and disinfected twice per day. It is recognized that on days of heavier traffic more cleaning may be necessary.

All hallways will be marked on the floor with six foot delineating markers. All hallways and common areas will have signs that advise users of the need to maintain social distance at all times while using the Courthouse.

Elevators will be posted indicating that no more than two individuals may use at one time. Court Security and the bailiff staff will make every effort to monitor this behavior. All elevators will be cleaned and disinfected twice per day.

A hand sanitizing station will be set up on floor one and floor two. The station will be equipped with hand sanitizer and paper towels.

Bailiffs

We will increase the number of bailiffs that we employ during the day so that we have more people available to gently enforce the need for social distancing. Bailiffs will be equipped with masks and gloves and any other PPE they feel is necessary for their safety during the workday. We will through the use of specific directions from the clerks and on notice provided make every effort to limit the personal interaction between the bailiffs and the public. The bailiffs in all interaction will maintain social distancing.

Court Hearings

The number of chairs at counsel table will be limited to two. The chairs at counsel table will be six feet apart at all times. Individuals will be discouraged from moving about in the courtroom unless absolutely necessary.

The witness stand will be equipped with a Plexiglas shield to protect the reporter. Until said shield is installed, a temporary witness stand shall be set up in each courtroom. The temporary witness stand shall be in a location that recognizes the need for social distancing and protection of all participants. The Court will encourage the use of Zoom and/or telephone testimony to bring witnesses before the Court.

Counsel table and the common areas of the courtroom will be cleaned and disinfected twice per day. If any party feels that additional cleaning or disinfecting is necessary, cleaning materials will be available for that purpose. It is recognized that depending on the level of use the cleaning and disinfecting may need to be done more often.

Interpreters will make every effort to use the Court's electronic interpreting system to achieve social distancing. Breaks will be taken if the need for attorney/client conversations becomes evident or is desired. Other interpreter services will be done in a manner to promote social distancing. The interpreter will be required to use a face mask or a face shield.

Whenever possible defendants appearing from a jail or prison will appear by Zoom or closed circuit jail camera.

Gallery seating in each courtroom shall be set up to promote social distancing. Chairs will be removed when necessary to achieve this purpose. The bench seating shall be notoriously marked so that the visitor and the bailiff are able to see six foot demarcations.

Signs will be posted outside the courtroom advising of the need to use social distancing when sitting in the courtroom.

The doors for each courtroom shall be propped open during all non-closed hearings so that the common use of doors and their surfaces is minimized.

If the Court believes that the gallery, for any hearing, may not allow for appropriate social distancing in their courtroom, all judges will be encouraged to use the Branch 1 courtroom or to use Zoom streaming.

Plea forms and waivers should whenever possible be filed and scanned into the court file prior to the commencement of any hearings. Any exhibits and other

documents that need to be submitted to the Court will be placed on a table at social distance from all parties and staff and will be retrieved by the clerk.

Every effort will be made to have prisoners from the Dodge County Jail and Wisconsin Department of Corrections appear by video or Zoom. If the hearing necessitates the appearance of a prisoner, their movement shall be the responsibility of the guards assigned to the task. The guards will wear masks. Per Dodge County Jail rules prisoners will be required to wear masks. Social distancing to the other participants will be used between the guards and the other participants in the hearing whenever possible. Participant safety will guide the actions of all guards.

Jury Trials

No jury trials will be conducted until after July 1, 2020. Jury trials will be conducted according to the following guidelines:

1. Social distancing will be of utmost importance in dealing with all jurors.

2. Jurors will be provided masks or face shields and will be required to use them during the trial or at any time during their participation in the jury process. If any juror has their own mask and wishes to wear it, they are encouraged to bring it with them on the day or days of their service. Hand sanitizer will be available during the day for use as a juror sees fit.

3. Upon entry to the Courthouse, the jurors will be escorted to the jury assembly room. Social distancing will be employed in that room with signs posted reminding jurors of the importance of social distancing on all entry doors and prominently in the room itself. If the size of the jury pool is too large to accommodate social distancing in the jury assembly room, a courtroom will be used for assembly. The room used for assembly will be cleaned and disinfected prior to and after its use.

4. At the time of trial, the jurors will be brought to the Branch 1 courtroom which will be used for all 12 person juries. It is understood that the courtroom used for jury must be able to accommodate the recording system employed by the judge presiding over the jury trial. Every effort will be made to have installed the DAR system in the Branch 1 courtroom. The courtroom will be set up in such a manner to allow significant space between all of the jurors. Two jury boxes will be set up for the purpose of jury selection only. One box will be the existing box. The second box will be on the opposite side of the courtroom. Hand held microphones for the jurors will not be used during jury selection. Once the jury is selected, the jurors will go to the jury rooms. We will employ two jury rooms during the course of the trial. Jury rooms are the rooms used for the jury to have their lunch or to use during breaks in the trial.

5. During the trial which will be conducted in the courtroom, the jurors will have assigned seats in order to minimize the potential of coming into contact with other jurors' contamination. One jury box will be used during the trial, however, additional rows will be added to accommodate social distancing. The jury seat armrests and surface that any juror may come into contact with will be cleaned over the lunch hour and in the morning before the jury resumes if it is a multiday trial.

6. A portable witness stand will be created to protect the witnesses, jurors and the court reporter. The witness stand will be positioned to allow the witness to view the in-court video and to allow observation of the witness by the jurors and litigants.

7. Lunch will be provided; however, the lunch will be a food service packed individual lunch. Every effort will be made to meet any dietary needs of individual jurors. Coffee will not be provided as it cannot be served without a risk of contamination. All other beverages served will be individually packaged and disinfected prior to being made available.

8. Jury deliberations will occur in a courtroom not in use. Folding tables will be set up in such a manner as to allow a safe social distance between the jurors at all times.

9. Bailiffs will at all times that they are dealing directly with the jurors wear a protective mask and gloves.

I have conferred with all Judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building regarding this Operating plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the stakeholders. A list of individuals consulted in the formulation of this plan is attached.

Date: 5/26/2020

Hon. Brian A. Pfitzinger
Presiding Judge
Approval

Date: May 27, 2020

Hon. Jennifer Dorow
Chief Judge
Approval