

## **Supreme Court issues updated COVID-19 policies and procedures**

TOPEKA—The Kansas Supreme Court today issued an administrative order, guidance documents, and personnel policies related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Over the last year, Kansas courts continued to serve their communities either in person following statewide safety protocols, or remotely through video hearings and online services," said Chief Justice Marla Luckert. "With approved COVID-19 vaccines more readily available, courts are ready to adopt updated protocols that reflect local health conditions, and our order today gives that direction."

The Supreme Court manages the state court system through policy and procedure set out in administrative orders, and that includes managing the pandemic response.

Orders dating to the beginning of the pandemic provided uniform health and safety protocols applied to courts statewide. Today's order gives chief judges the authority and responsibility to adopt minimum standard health protocols necessary based on local health conditions.

The order also encourages courts to continue using remote hearings to dispose of cases safely and efficiently.

### **Administrative Order 2021-PR-048**

[2021-PR-048](#) requires all district and appellate courts in Kansas to develop and follow minimum standard health protocols to avoid exposing court users, staff, and

judicial officers to COVID-19.

The chief judge in each of the state's 31 judicial districts is responsible for developing protocols for all courts within each district. Each district must have a COVID-19 screening and communication protocol, and the protocol must consider whether physical distancing and masking are necessary based on local health conditions.

### **Guidance documents**

The Supreme Court also issued guidance documents for developing minimum standard health protocols and for conducting jury trials during COVID-19.

[Supreme Court Guidance for Developing Minimum Standard Health Protocols](#)

[Supreme Court Guidance for Conducting Jury Proceedings](#)

The minimum standard health protocol guidance is new. The jury trial guidance is an updated version of the prior Supreme Court Mandates and Guidance Regarding Resuming Jury Proceedings.

"This guidance will help chief judges as they develop health protocols and jury trial procedures, while also giving them flexibility to adapt to health conditions in their judicial districts," Luckert said. "Even as approved vaccines become readily accessible, courts should continue to apply precautionary measures as necessary for public confidence in our courts and to protect the integrity of trial by jury, a cornerstone of our justice system."

## **Personnel Policies**

Prior COVID-19 operations orders had specific COVID-19 personnel policies for the judicial branch workforce. Going forward, personnel policies will no longer be included in administrative orders but will be available on the [kscourts.org](https://kscourts.org) website. This gives judicial branch employees easy access to information they need while not burdening court users with information that doesn't apply to them.

## **Court response to COVID**

For all court actions related to the pandemic, visit [Kansas courts response to COVID-19.](#)