



10th Judicial District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COURT RECEIVES APPROVAL TO RESUME JURY TRIALS WHEN LOCAL CONDITIONS MEET GATING CRITERIA

The 10th Judicial District Court received approval to resume jury trials from State Court Administrator Nancy Dixon. This approval allows for trials resume with strict adherence to Supreme Court Orders, the Ad Hoc Jury Task Force’s recommendations and local health official recommendations.

While the Court has approval to proceed with our plan, our Pandemic Response Team has determined that local health conditions do not meet our minimum standards to resume in-person jury trials. The Court continues to operate virtually and monitor the local 14-day average positivity rate and provide updates through e-mail, social media, and our website on operations. “We have the responsibility to balance the public health crisis and risk to jurors compelled to serve with the individual rights of litigants awaiting trial.” Said Chief Judge Thomas Kelly Ryan.

As we move into the next phase of jury trial planning, please note the following key dates:

- ⚖ September 28th: Webinar with Chief Judge Ryan on resuming jury trials
- ⚖ October 2020: Counsel reviews the Court’s approved plan and are prepared to meet the requirements for conducting jury trials under pandemic conditions.
- ⚖ October 23rd: Webinar with Chief Judge Ryan on resuming jury trials
- ⚖ October 26th: With appropriate local health conditions, in-person jury trials resume
- ⚖ December 14th through January 8th: Move to the new courthouse—no in-person jury trials
- ⚖ January 11, 2021: In-person jury trials at the new courthouse

“Jury trials represent roughly 2% of all district court operations but require substantial planning and resources. We are conducting every other proceeding, including multiple-day bench trials, virtually.” Said Judge Ryan. We have conducted 35,000 virtual hearings since March and continue to improve and expand those hearings. Jury trials present unique challenges and we want to make sure that we get it right.”

This summer, the Court collaborated with the Johnson County Bar Association and KCPT to gain public opinion on the best way to resume jury trials. Those efforts are reflected in the approved plan. “Over the next few weeks, the Court will internally test our approved



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plan and conduct a webinar for members of the Bar.” Said Judge Ryan. “We recognize the first webinar falls on a religious holiday and as such, we are hosting a second session in October. We expect attorneys to review the published plan by then and be prepared to ask questions on October 23rd.”

The plan is available on the Court’s website and will be e-mailed to all counsel registered with the Court. https://courts.jocogov.org/dc_info_for_jurors.aspx The Johnson County Bar is hosting the webinars and will post the sessions for on-demand review. To register, please visit www.jocobar.org.

Finally,, Judge Ryan stated, “Jury trials will look different, and we expect everyone from the court and Bar to be prepared and patient. We recognize that counsel require sufficient notice to secure witnesses for jury trials and want to assure the Bar that we appreciate your flexibility during this time.”

For those willing to try a completely different kind of jury trial, attorneys have the option to agree to virtual jury selection and even a completely virtual jury trial. The Court’s plan adopted the Ad Hoc Jury Task Force’s virtual best practices. Those are available for your consideration to conduct a virtual jury trial. Any attorneys wishing to pursue this option are encouraged to contact the presiding judge and begin the planning process.

The current situation is one that presents challenges to the Court’s normal operating procedures. We are looking at all of the ways in which we might temporarily alter those procedures to minimize risk while still attending to the Court’s core responsibility to conduct jury trials. We appreciate the cooperation and patience of the public as we work to implement these changes in procedure.

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