

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO

In re:

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

AMENDED GENERAL ORDER NO.
21-02

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have advised that the risk of severe disease from COVID-19 is now generally lower. The United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio has accordingly modified the health and safety protocols that apply in general public spaces in the courthouses in the district. Those updated general health and safety requirements are set forth in Amended General Order No. 2020-08-12 of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, which is available in its entirety on its website. For convenience of reference, the health and safety protocols established for general public spaces in each courthouse by the United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio are also set forth below.

The purpose of this Amended General Order No. 21-02 is to set out the health and safety protocols that apply in the Bankruptcy Court's areas in the courthouses in the district that may be accessed by the public.

1. HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS IN GENERAL PUBLIC AND COMMON AREAS IN COURTHOUSES

As set forth in the United States District Court's Amended General Order No.

2020-08-12, based upon the CDC's COVID-19 Community Level model, the following requirements apply in the general public and common areas in the district's courthouses:

- A. Consistent with the CDC guidance, the wearing of face coverings is not required to gain entrance into a federal courthouse in the Northern District of Ohio unless the then-current COVID-19 Community Level is high in the courthouse location. A high Community Level will be indicated on signage that will be posted at the entrance.
- B. Health screening (temperature checking and COVID-19 screening questions) for admittance to a courthouse is eliminated.
- C. Everyone entering a courthouse in the Northern District of Ohio is strongly encouraged to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19, which includes a booster.
- D. Jurors entering a jury assembly room will be required to wear a face covering, unless otherwise instructed.
- E. Individuals attending a naturalization ceremony in a courthouse will be required to wear a face covering, unless otherwise instructed.
- F. Upon entering courtrooms, judges' chambers and offices, or any space where a court proceeding is being conducted, all persons must comply with the rules and requirements of the presiding judge regarding face coverings.
- G. Upon entering space belonging to a tenant agency in a federal courthouse, all persons, regardless of vaccination status, must comply with the rules and requirements of that tenant agency regarding face coverings and physical distancing.

- H. Judicial officers are encouraged to implement a mask requirement during events involving a large number of participants.
- I. If possible, proceedings should be conducted by video conference or teleconference.
- J. Employees reporting to a courthouse will self-monitor for indicative COVID-19 symptoms before reporting to the workplace. If COVID-19 symptoms are present, the employee will stay home and return to the workplace pursuant to the guidance of the CDC and/or healthcare provider.

2. HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS IN BANKRUPTCY COURT PUBLIC AND COMMON AREAS IN DISTRICT COURTHOUSES

The following requirements apply in the specific public and common areas in the district's courthouses in which the bankruptcy court operates. Those areas include bankruptcy courtrooms and related spaces such as attorney witness and conference rooms, the Clerk's office intake areas and bankruptcy judges' chambers.

- A. Each judge will continue to decide and communicate how court proceedings in matters assigned to her/him will occur, whether by telephone, by video, in-person, or a combination of methods.
- B. If the CDC Community Level for an individual courthouse is "High," regardless of vaccination status, the use of face masks is required for all individuals entering that bankruptcy court location's public areas, including courtrooms. The face mask must completely conceal the wearer's nose and mouth at all times.
- C. If the CDC Community Level for an individual courthouse is "High," at the

discretion of the presiding judge, a participant(s) in a proceeding in the judge's courtroom may be permitted to remove her/his mask. Spectators in courtrooms must remain masked at all times. If an individual is uncertain about whether it is permissible to remove a mask in a courtroom, a question should be directed to the presiding judge or court staff. In deciding whether it is permissible for an individual to remove his/her mask in a courtroom, the presiding judge may inquire about the individual's vaccination status. The inquiry may be made under oath at the discretion of the presiding judge.

- D. The general health and safety protocols in this Section 2 do not preclude a presiding judge from adopting different protocols for that judge's courtroom and chambers.

3. NOTICE OF ORDER

The Clerk of Court shall provide immediate notice to the public of this Amended General Order No. 21-02.

4. EFFECTIVE DATE AND DURATION OF ORDER

This Amended General Order No. 21-02 is effective immediately. It will remain in effect until further Order of the Court.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

DATED: April 8, 2022

FOR THE COURT:

/s/Mary Ann Whipple

Mary Ann Whipple
Chief Judge