

Memorandum

New York State Expands Reopening of Courthouses Including E-Filing of New Non-Essential Matters Statewide

May 22, 2020

This week, the New York State Unified Court System announced increased access to in-person courthouse services and e-filing, continuing the process of reopening the courts during the coronavirus disease 2019 (“COVID-19”) pandemic.

New York City and Surrounding Areas

On May 20, 2020, Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence Marks issued a [memorandum](#) announcing further expansion of judicial services. Starting Monday, May 25, 2020, e-filing will be restored, including the filing of new non-essential matters, through the NYSCEF system for counties that have not yet met the safety benchmarks required to participate in Governor Andrew Cuomo's regional reopening plan. These counties include the five New York City counties, as well as Nassau, Suffolk, Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester counties.

The restoration of NYSCEF usage will be limited to cases in which represented parties file and serve all papers electronically. Unrepresented litigants may continue to file, serve and be served papers through non-electronic means in those cases.

Central New York and the Finger Lakes Regions

Earlier this week, judges and designated staff began a gradual return to in-person courthouse operations in 35 counties where Governor Cuomo has eased restrictions on commercial activity. Courts and county clerk's offices in these counties are now accepting e-filing of new non-essential matters through the NYSCEF system. These counties span the Central New York, Finger Lakes, Mohawk Valley and Southern Tier regions.

Western New York and the Capital Region

On May 20, 2020, Chief Judge Janet DiFiore and Chief Administrative Judge Marks issued a [press release](#) announcing that judges, chambers staff, designated clerks and support staff will begin returning to courthouses in 13 additional counties that have met the Governor's safety benchmarks. New cases may also be e-filed in these counties.

On Thursday, May 21, 2020 the following Western New York counties will gradually resume in-person courthouse operations: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie and Niagara.

On Tuesday, May 26, 2020 the following Capital Region counties will also gradually resume in-person courthouse operations: Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren and Washington.

While remaining open for business during the pandemic, courts in these 13 counties had limited their operations by consolidating court facilities, implementing and expanding virtual court models, and taking a wide range of other measures to restrict courthouse traffic and contain the spread of COVID-19.

As of May 21, judges' chambers, clerks' offices and back offices in courthouses in these counties will be open. Physical distancing measures will be enforced, in addition to the following steps:

- Non-employee court visitors must undergo COVID-19 screening before entering a courthouse.
- Anyone entering a courthouse must wear a mask.
- All staff who interact with court visitors must wear a mask.
- Courtrooms and other areas will be carefully marked to ensure proper physical distancing.
- Court facilities will be regularly sanitized.
- Acrylic barriers, hand sanitizer dispensers and other safety features will be installed in courthouse areas as needed.

As courthouse operations throughout New York State continue to open up, these measures will serve as a template for the return of judges and staff to courthouses in counties that have not yet met Governor Cuomo's safety benchmarks.

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