

Wisconsin Supreme Court: Wisconsin court system delivering 600,000 face masks to circuit courts statewide

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Madison, Wisconsin (June 12, 2020) – Wisconsin state court system staff are distributing 600,000 face masks purchased through the Director of State Courts Office to assist circuit courts statewide in advancing local plans to resume in-person proceedings and jury trials.

Under a Wisconsin Supreme Court order issued May 22, circuit courts must require everyone in a courtroom, jury room or other confined court-related space during a proceeding to wear a face covering as one of several prerequisites to resuming in-person proceedings.

More than 94,000 face masks were delivered to the Milwaukee County Circuit Court on June 10, and about 500,000 masks have been delivered statewide since June 1. Masks are being distributed based on the number of judgeships per county, with Milwaukee being the single largest delivery.

“It’s been amazing to see court staff and administrators meet the unprecedented challenges presented by COVID-19,” said Director of State Courts Randy R. Koschnick. “Just weeks ago, we switched gears to assist circuit courts in holding remote proceedings to help reduce potential spread of coronavirus. We continue to

rely on Zoom and YouTube to help keep cases moving and accessible to the public, but now we're turning things around to help courts re-establish in-person proceedings," Koschnick said.

Before resuming in-person proceedings, which were halted statewide by a previous Supreme Court order, circuit courts are required to develop operational plans, including steps being taken to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus.

The plans must be submitted to and approved by the respective chief judge in each of the state's nine judicial administrative districts. Plans must reflect that circuit courts have effectively communicated with the clerk of the circuit court and representatives of the county, sheriff's department, district attorney's office, and the local office of the state public defender, if applicable.

Courts must also communicate with jurors about procedures and steps taken to reduce health risks associated with coronavirus. And signage that communicates the requirements of wearing face coverings, washing hands and cleaning frequently touched surfaces must be posted at specific locations in each courthouse.

As of June 11, chief judges had approved such plans for circuit courts in 14 Wisconsin counties, including: Adams, Barron, Bayfield, Calumet, Dodge, Douglas, Dunn, Fond du Lac, Kewaunee, Marinette, Oconto, Rusk, Walworth and Waushara. Additional counties have submitted proposed plans for review.

A growing list of counties and links to orders approved by chief judges can be found on the court system's [website](#).

Circuit courts are expected to take local needs into consideration and incorporate into their operational plans the recommendations set forth in the Wisconsin Court COVID-19 Task Force's final [report](#).