PRESS RELEASE

New York State
Unified Court System

Hon. Lawrence K. Marks
Chief Administrative Judge

Contact:
Lucian Chalfen,
Public Information Director
Arlene Hackel, Deputy Director
(212) 428-2500

www.nycourts.gov/press

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Grand Juries to Resume Next Month in the City's Five Boroughs; New York City Courts to Expand In-Person Criminal Proceedings

NEW YORK CITY−Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence K. Marks today announced that, starting Monday, August 10, grand juries will convene in the five boroughs. New York City court administrators have been carefully planning for the safe resumption of grand juries, which decide−based on the evidence and the law−whether a person should be formally charged with a crime. In the coming days, jury summonses will be sent to prospective jurors in the five boroughs.

Courts in New York City will also resume in-court conferences of felony cases where the defendant is at liberty. Additionally, as the New York City courts enter Phase Three of a return to in-person operations, the types of criminal matters that may be heard in person will be expanded to include preliminary hearings in cases involving defendants being held in jail on felony complaints; selected plea and sentencing proceedings for defendants at liberty; and arraignments of defendants who have been issued desk appearance tickets.

Throughout the pandemic, the City's high-volume courts have continued to increase their virtual capacity to meet the demand for services while working to safely expand in-court operations.

Since mid-March, New York City's Criminal Court has conducted nearly 19,000 arraignments, held over 34,000 other criminal proceedings and conducted nearly 600 preliminary hearings in felony matters. There were also more than 11,360 proceedings conducted citywide in State Supreme Court's criminal term.

In marking the New York City courts' transition to Phase Three, Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence K. Marks noted that in-person proceedings will also be expanded to include a limited number of bench trials in civil matters. Family Court proceedings will continue to be conducted virtually and, as necessary, in person.

During Phase Three, judges will continue their use of virtual proceedings whenever legally permissible and logistically possible. Where an in-person proceeding involves an incarcerated individual, that individual shall appear remotely unless otherwise ordered by the assigned judge. Non-essential matters, criminal proceedings (except as noted), juvenile delinquency proceedings and mental hygiene law proceedings pertaining to a hospitalized adult will continue to be held virtually and heard by the assigned judge. Mediation and alternative dispute resolution will be conducted remotely.

There will be staggered scheduling of court appearances, court calendars and courtroom usage to limit foot traffic in the courthouse; non-judicial staffing levels will be adjusted modestly to support necessary administrative court functions and provide for the moderate increase in courthouse traffic; and non-reporting staff will continue to work remotely.

Among the steps taken to prepare for Phase Three in the New York City courts, dozens of courtrooms have been retrofitted to ensure the safe expansion of in-person operations. Other measures in place to protect the health and safety of judges, staff and court visitors include:

- Court visitors will be required to undergo COVID-19 screening, including temperature checks, before entering the courthouse.
- Anyone entering the courthouse will be required to wear a mask.
- All staff who interact with court visitors must wear a mask.
- Courthouse areas will be carefully marked to ensure proper physical distancing.
- Court facilities will be regularly sanitized.
- Installation of acrylic barriers, hand sanitizer dispensers and other safety features in courthouse areas as needed.

"As we move forward with our phased-in restoration of in-court operations in the five boroughs, we will continue to work diligently to meet the justice needs of those served by our New York City courts while remaining vigilant in protecting the health of our judges, professional workforce and all those who visit and use our courthouses," said Judge Marks.

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