PRESS RELEASE

New York State
Unified Court System

Hon. Lawrence K. Marks
Chief Administrative Judge

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New York State Court System to Begin Return to In-Person Courthouse Operations

Judges and Staff in Counties Meeting Governor's Benchmarks to Return to Their Courthouses; New Case Filings Will Be Accepted

NEW YORK–As the New York State court system continues to navigate the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, Chief Judge Janet DiFiore and Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence K. Marks today announced the gradual return of judges and staff to courthouses in upstate counties that have met the Governor's established safety benchmarks.

Spanning five Judicial Districts, the return to courthouses will start next week in 30 upstate counties: on Monday, May 18, in the counties of Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, Yates, Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery, Oneida, Otsego and Schoharie; followed by Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties on Wednesday, May 20.

While remaining open for business during the pandemic, the court system had limited operations, consolidated court facilities, implemented and expanded virtual court operations, and taken a wide range of other measures over the past two months to restrict courthouse traffic and contain the spread of COVID-19. With guidance from

public health officials, plans to safely resume more normalized court operations have been ongoing.

Beginning next week, New York State court system judges and chambers staff, along with designated clerks and support staff, in the previously named upstate counties will return to their courthouses. Importantly, new cases may be filed in these counties electronically.

Courthouse areas that will be used in this first phase include judges' chambers, clerks' offices and back offices. Social distancing and other steps restricting courthouse traffic will be enforced to protect the health and safety of judges and staff, attorneys, litigants and members of the public. Among other safety measures:

- Non-employee court visitors will be required to undergo COVID-19 screening before entering the courthouse.
- All staff who interact with court visitors must wear a mask.
- Anyone entering the courthouse will be required to wear a mask, with masks available for those who need one.
- Courtroom and other areas will be carefully marked to ensure proper physical distancing.
- Court facilities will be regularly sanitized.
- Hand sanitizer dispensers will be available throughout the courthouse.
- Acrylic barriers and other safety features will be installed in courthouse areas as needed.

The plans in these jurisdictions will serve as a template for the return of judges and staff to courthouses in other counties of the State.

"I look forward to next week's return of judges and staff to courthouse facilities in many of our upstate counties−marking a major first step in our resumption to in-person court operations. I am thankful to Administrative Judges Craig Doran and Anthony Cannataro, who are leading our statewide planning efforts, and to all the judges and staff in these upstate counties, for their hard work in preparation for this milestone," said Chief Judge DiFiore.

Added Judge Marks, "As we enter this first phase of our return to our courthouses, we will move carefully and steadily. We will regularly review our safety and other practices,

adapting our protocols and facilities as needed, as we strive to serve the justice needs of New Yorkers while balancing the safety of all those who work in and visit our courthouses."

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