PRESS RELEASE

New York State
Unified Court System

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Courts in Mid-Hudson Region and Long Island Begin Return to In-Person Courthouse Operations

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

NEW YORK−Chief Judge Janet DiFiore and Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence K. Marks today announced the phased-in return of judges and staff to courthouses in nine more counties that have met the Governor's established safety benchmarks. Starting Wednesday, May 27, courts will gradually resume in-person operations in Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland and Westchester counties, followed by Ulster and Sullivan counties on Thursday, May 28; and Nassau and Suffolk counties on Friday, May 29.

Over the past two weeks, courts in judicial districts spanning the State's Finger Lakes, Mohawk Valley, Southern Tier, North Country, Central New York, Western New York and Capital District regions−which have all met the Governor's safety benchmarks−have been carefully and steadily returning to in-person courthouse operations.

Beginning tomorrow, New York State court system judges and chambers staff, along with designated clerks and support staff, in the nine previously named counties will return to their courthouses. As of Monday, May 25, courts in these counties have been accepting new cases that are filed electronically.

While remaining open for business throughout the pandemic, courts in these nine counties had limited their operations, 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. With guidance from public health officials, plans to safely resume more normalized court operations have been ongoing.

Courthouse areas that will be used in this first phase include judges' chambers, clerks' offices and back offices. Physical 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, including:

- Non-employee court visitors will be required to undergo COVID-19 screening 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.
- Courtroom 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.

These measures will be closely monitored, with protocols and facilities to be adapted as needed.

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