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MAY 26, 2021

**Delaware Courts move to Phase 3 of reopening plan, restart jury trials June 1;
Chief Justice extends judicial emergency to July 2, 2021**

*The return to Phase 3 reopening will allow the resumption of jury trials and increase in staffing
and the number of people allowed in courtrooms and court facilities*

On Wednesday, Chief Justice Collins J. Seitz, Jr., in consultation with the other Justices of the Delaware Supreme Court and the Presiding Judges of all courts, signed an order extending the judicial emergency to July 2, 2021 as the Delaware Judiciary restarts in-person proceedings and scales back some COVID-19 restrictions at the courthouses beginning June 1, 2021.

While the move to Phase 3 of the Courts Reopening Plan on June 1 will allow many in-person proceedings including jury trials to resume and increase the number of visitors and staff allowed in the courthouses, many COVID safety measures will remain in place for now. Consistent with Governor John Carney's most recent modification of his State of Emergency Order keeping the mask mandate in place for state-owned buildings, Delaware court facilities will keep the mask mandate for all visitors. The Delaware Courts will also maintain temperature screenings and COVID screening questions at the entrances to all court facilities and continue to follow social distancing practices. (For a complete list of Phase 3 safety measures please consult the Court's Reopening plan here: <https://courts.delaware.gov/aoc/courtsreopeningplan.pdf>.) Judges are also encouraged to continue to use audio and video conferencing technology.

"Thanks to Delawareans pulling together and getting vaccinated, we have seen a dramatic decline in COVID-19 infections. The Delaware courts will now resume in-person hearings and jury trials. While the use of video technology allowed the courts to keep on top of their dockets during the pandemic, we still have a significant backlog of cases in some of our courts. We will prioritize criminal matters as we work hard to return the courts to their pre-pandemic operations," said Chief Justice Seitz. "As of July 6, we will authorize the courts to return to full staffing in our judicial facilities. We will continue to ease restrictions as conditions permit but the health and safety of all those who work in or visit Delaware court facilities remain our first priority," Seitz said.

Over the past several months, clear plastic shields have been installed in all courtrooms that will be used for jury trials along with "jury pods" in jury boxes that will surround jurors on three sides, allowing them a clear view of the courtroom while providing protection.

This is the second time since the start of the pandemic that the Delaware Courts have moved to restart jury trials. The first move to Phase 3 was on October 5, 2020. A jury trial was held in Kent County before the Courts returned to Phase 2 restrictions on Nov. 16, 2020 due to a surge in COVID-19 cases.

The order signed on Wednesday by the Chief Justice was the 15th 30-day extension of the emergency declaration since the Chief Justice first declared a judicial state of emergency on March

16, 2020. The latest order extending the emergency can be found here:
<https://courts.delaware.gov/rules/pdf/COVIDOrder21.pdf>

The Delaware Courts continue to provide the public and members of the Bar with regular updates on changes to court operations on the Court's COVID-19 response page:
<https://courts.delaware.gov/aoc/covid-19>.