

Updated Operating Protocols
Town and Village Courts
5th District
(Effective December 9, 2020)

For the past many months, the Unified Court System has permitted in-person proceedings in accordance with the Governor's un-PAUSE New York plan. Foot traffic in the courthouses has been gradually increased to correspond with an improvement in the metrics measuring the spread of the Coronavirus. Recently, the metrics have indicated the need to once again reduce foot traffic in the courthouses to protect the health and safety of litigants, lawyers, court staff and judges. Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence Marks' Memorandum dated November 13, 2020 is incorporated herein and this document is intended to provide enhanced guidance thereto.

In any District, the Administrative Judge may, based upon local conditions, enact more restrictive operational protocols deemed appropriate by the Administrative Judge.

Commencing December 9, 2020, all Town and Village Court operations in the 5th Judicial District of the State of New York shall be conducted pursuant to this Plan. **IF A MATTER IS NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED BELOW, THE COURT MAY NOT HEAR THE MATTER IN PERSON.**

I. COURTHOUSE OPERATIONS

- A. Occupancy of all courtrooms shall be limited to the lesser of 10 people or 25% of the posted room occupancy per code, including Judges, court staff, lawyers, litigants and spectators.
- B. All current safety measures and protocols will continue.

II. COURT PROCEEDINGS

- A. No new prospective trial jurors (criminal or civil) will be summoned for jury service until further notice.
- B. No new "in person" bench trials and hearings in civil and criminal cases will be conducted. Exception: Preliminary Hearings in Criminal Court may be heard in-person if necessary and pursuant to the Updated Operating Protocols effective November 23, 2020.
- C. Off hour arraignments. In all counties in the 5th District, the Centralized Arraignment Parts shall continue virtual arraignments as previously approved.
- D. Judges may conduct arraignments of in-custody defendants during normal court sessions.
- E. Judges may also conduct arraignments where the Court receives a request for an arraignment by either the prosecution or the defense.
- F. Judges are encouraged to more robustly conference criminal matters virtually/telephonically and if acceptable disposition is reached, plea affidavits are strongly encouraged. Please work with your ADA and defense counsel on procedure. These matters may not be handled in person.
- G. Judges are encouraged to use a mail-in plea bargaining disposition process that would allow a defendant charged with a VTL infraction to proceed without a personal appearance. Please work with your ADA and defense counsel on procedure.
- H. While currently there exists no Executive Order nor statutory directive that would excuse a failure to appear or prevent a judge from suspending a motorist's license for failing to appear at a court session, Judges are encouraged to utilize their judicial discretion when considering the suspension of a motorist's license for failure to appear during this pandemic.