

17<sup>th</sup> JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT

EUGENE G. DOHERTY  
CHIEF JUDGE



WINNEBAGO COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
400 WEST STATE STREET - ROOM 215  
ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS 61101  
PHONE 815-319-4800

**PRESS RELEASE**

Date: March 12, 2020

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**COURT REMAINS OPEN, TAKES PRECAUTIONS**

As it performs essential functions, the Winnebago and Boone County Courts of the 17<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit remain open. Although the present risk level in our area remains low, health care professionals advise that we should all minimize contact to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. The Circuit Court intends to take the following reasonable measures toward that end:

- **Courthouse Environment:** We have been informed by building maintenance that cleaning and disinfecting efforts have been intensified, especially with respect to surfaces commonly touched like railings, doorknobs, etc. We may ask certain patrons observed coughing or sneezing to wear a mask which we will provide if we have sufficient supplies. Such a request must be honored.
- **Juries:** The Court system cannot function without juries. We are, however, reviewing ways to minimize the need for jurors to be summoned to the courthouse. While some jurors will still be summoned, reducing the numbers summoned will create a less congested environment and increase the personal space available for summoned jurors.
- **Sick Jurors:** If you have been summoned for jury duty and are ill, please call the number listed on the jury summons to discuss your situation. Attempts will be made to accommodate your situation.
- **Litigants:** If you have a case scheduled and begin to feel ill, you should consider the following:
  - Contact the opposing party or attorney to explore an agreed continuance.
  - If there is no agreement, contact the circuit clerk's office to advise if you are unable to attend court. Judges will consider on a case-by-case basis whether a continuance of the court date is in order. Providing medical documentation of your condition will likely help.

## 17<sup>th</sup> JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT

- Marriages: We will continue to perform marriages in the courthouse as needed. However, we will allow *only* the couple being married to attend. Please do not bring additional people with you to the courthouse to attend your wedding.
- Employees: The Court's directive to its employees is that if you are sick, stay home! However, we realize that honoring that request may be difficult if the employee has limited sick time. The Court is formulating policies to soften the blow for employees affected by the coronavirus so as to prevent unwell employees from coming to work.

The current situation is one that presents challenges to the Court's normal operating procedures. We are looking at all of the ways in which we might temporarily alter those procedures to minimize risk while still attending to the Court's core responsibilities. We appreciate the cooperation and patience of the public as we work to implement these changes in procedure.

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