

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT, SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR PASCO AND PINELLAS COUNTIES, FLORIDA**

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 2021-029 PA/PI-CIR

RE: TEMPORARY EMERGENCY FACE MASK REQUIREMENT FOR COURT FACILITIES IN CONFORMITY WITH THE FLORIDA SUPREME COURT ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER AOSC21-17, AMENDMENT 1

Due to the increased cases of COVID-19, including the rise of the Delta variant, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has provided updated face mask guidance for fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people.¹ The Florida Supreme Court has issued AOSC21-17, *Amendment 1*, in response to the latest declaration of a national public health emergency and change in health guidance by the CDC.

According to the Florida Department of Health, 73,199 new cases of COVID-19 were reported on July 16, 2021, up from 45,584 new cases on July 9, 2021. The positivity rate during this same time rose from 11.6% to 15.1%.² The new case positivity rate for Pasco County for July 16, 2021-July 22, 2021 was 18.5%. The new case positivity rate for Pinellas County for the same time was 14.1%.³ CDC guidance is that in an area of high or substantial transmission, such as Florida at the present time, all adults should wear a face mask in indoor public places.

The health, safety, and well-being of our employees and participants in court proceedings are a high priority and we must continue to take steps to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 in court facilities. In addition, every event involving potential transmission from a known infected person results in contact tracing, testing and forced absences from work causing disruptions in court business and timely conduct of important proceedings.

In accordance with Article V, section 7, Florida Constitution, Rule of Judicial Administration 2.215, and section 43.26, Florida Statutes,

IT IS ORDERED:

1. Anyone entering a courtroom, hearing room, jury assembly room, the Pinellas County Fred G. Minnis Law Library, or any other room or location where an in-person court proceeding or activity is taking place is required to wear a face mask including observers. The term “in-person proceeding” means the assembly of prospective jurors, voir dire, juror deliberations, and any status conference, hearing trial, or other proceeding conducted by a judge, magistrate, or hearing officer that is conducted in person. Judges, at their own discretion and as circumstances require, may remove their face mask while on the bench during a court proceeding.

¹ See CDC’s website, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>, updated July 28, 2021.

² See Florida Department of Health http://ww11.doh.state.fl.us/comm/partners/covid19_report_archive/covid19-data/covid19_data_latest.pdf, page 1.

³ See Florida Department of Health http://ww11.doh.state.fl.us/comm/partners/covid19_report_archive/covid19-data/covid19_data_latest.pdf, page 5.

2. Face masks should completely cover the nose and mouth and fit snugly around the nose, chin, and sides of the face, as recommended by the CDC. For their own comfort, all persons are encouraged to bring and wear their own face mask. If individuals attempt to enter areas in the court facility where masks are required and do not have their own face mask, a disposable mask will be provided to them.
3. Physical distancing is not required but is strongly encouraged whenever space permits. Individual requests for distancing will be addressed by the presiding judge.
4. All judges, judicial assistants, and judicial staff are required to wear a face mask while at the workplace, except when alone in their own work area. Masks are also required for judicial staff in a shared vehicle if travel is for a work-related purpose.
5. Subparagraph 1A of AO 2021-019 is temporarily suspended. It remains suspended while this AO is in effect. When this AO is rescinded, subparagraph 1A of AO 2021-019 will be in effect.
6. This temporary order shall remain in effect as an exception to the standard protocols until local health conditions improve and the mask requirement can be terminated.

DONE AND ORDERED in Chambers at St. Petersburg, Pinellas County, Florida, this _____ day of July, 2021.

ORIGINAL SIGNED ON JULY 30, 2021
BY ANTHONY RONDOLINO, CHIEF JUDGE

cc: All Judges
The Honorable Bruce Bartlett, State Attorney
The Honorable Sara Mollo, Public Defender
The Honorable Nikki Alvarez-Sowles, Clerk of Court, Pasco County
The Honorable Ken Burke, Clerk of Court, Pinellas County
The Honorable Chris Nocco, Sheriff, Pasco County
The Honorable Bob Gualtieri, Sheriff, Pinellas County
Gay Inskeep, Trial Courts Administrator
Ita M. Neymotin, Regional Counsel, Second District
Ngozi Acholonu, Assistant Regional Counsel
Kimberly Thompson, Chief Operations Manager, Pasco County Clerk's Office
Michele Emmerman, Director of Administrative Services for Pasco County
Paul Sacco, Director, Facility Management, Pinellas County
Jeffrey Steinsnyder, County Attorney, Pasco County
Jewel White, County Attorney, Pinellas County
Dan Biles, County Administrator, Pasco County
Barry A. Burton, County Administrator, Pinellas County
Law Enforcement Agencies, Pasco and Pinellas Counties
Bar Associations, Pasco and Pinellas Counties
Law Libraries, Pasco and Pinellas Counties