

News Release



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New Jersey Judiciary to Resume Jury Trials

The New Jersey Judiciary will resume jury trials incrementally in September, the Supreme Court announced in [an order](#) issued today.

The plan is to use a combination of remote and in-person proceedings to select juries, and to conduct live trials with social distancing in courthouses.

Criminal and civil trials have been suspended in New Jersey for nearly four months. Today, 4,749 defendants remain in jail pretrial, more than 2,700 of whom have been indicted, and a far larger number of civil litigants also await the resumption of trials. The plan will allow cases to move forward while still protecting the public during the COVID-19 health crisis.

“This is a temporary solution to an unprecedented situation,” Chief Justice Stuart Rabner said. “We cannot predict when jury trials will be able to resume in the same manner they were held pre-COVID 19. Nor can we leave them on hold indefinitely. The Judiciary has a responsibility to ensure the fair and timely administration of justice, and resuming jury trials is a key part of fulfilling that responsibility.”

To ensure the health and safety of jurors and others, extra care must be taken at all phases, and multiple courtrooms will be needed for each trial. That will present severe space restrictions at courthouses throughout the State. To address those practical concerns, the Judiciary plans to conduct jury selection through a hybrid process done both virtually and in-person. The presentation of evidence at trial will take place in court.

Even with those measures, the Judiciary does not expect to be able to conduct more than one to three trials at a time in any courthouse.

In order to avoid bringing in large groups of prospective jurors, initial questioning of potential jurors will be conducted virtually in the presence of the judge and attorneys from both parties. The in-person phase of jury selection will be conducted observing social distancing requirements and with jurors and others generally required to wear masks.

When the selection process has been completed, jurors will be empaneled for a socially distanced in-person trial, which will be conducted in accordance with public health guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New Jersey Department of Health.

Empaneled jurors will be required to wear masks, which the Judiciary can provide as needed. Throughout the trial, the Judiciary will enforce social distancing to avoid close contact between trial participants. The plan also provides for designated restrooms and break areas, as well as additional cleaning and sanitizing.

Jury trials will begin first in the Atlantic/Cape May; Bergen; and Cumberland/Gloucester/Salem vicinages.

“Over the coming months, criminal trials will gradually resume in all counties and will expand to include civil cases,” said Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts.

The goal is to conduct at least one civil and one criminal trial at a time in each county in the coming months. Assignment judges and presiding judges will work closely with attorneys to identify the cases that will proceed, giving priority to cases with defendants who are detained and have no co-defendants.

Attorneys and parties will be invited to walk through the physical layout of reconfigured courtrooms in advance.

“By reconfiguring courtrooms and making effective use of technology, trial participants will be able to see jurors both during the virtual part of the selection process and during socially distanced in-person trials,” Judge Grant said.

More details of the Judiciary’s plan can be found [here](#).

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