

**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE TO THE BAR AND PUBLIC CONCERNING
DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY COVID-19 RECOVERY GUIDELINES (PHASE III)**

The United States District Court and the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of New Jersey have transitioned to Phase III of the COVID-19 Recovery Plan.

Please review the attached COVID-19 Phase III Protocols. Unless otherwise noted in the Phase III Protocols, Phase II Protocols for the United States Bankruptcy Court will remain in effect. The current target dates for Phase III are October 1, 2020 – January 4, 2021.

All information concerning Bankruptcy Court operations and procedures during COVID-19 are available on the Court's website, njb.uscourts.gov. For ease of reference, a direct link to Phase II recovery guidelines can be found [here](#).

Dated: October 5, 2020

Jeanne A. Naughton, Clerk

PHASE III PROTOCOL

**Unless otherwise noted below, the Phase II protocols will remain in effect.*

PHASE III PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: October 1, 2020 thru January 4, 2021

U.S. DISTRICT COURT	
COURTROOMS	All courtrooms are scheduled to be outfitted with plexiglass district-wide by the end of October.
	All courtrooms will have 6-foot social distancing markers placed throughout.
	A procedure alerting GSA to provide cleaning of the courtrooms between proceedings will be implemented.
	An assessment of other logistical and IT-related considerations (microphone covers, a way to verify the intermittent cleaning has been completed, etc.) will be made as proceedings get underway.
PROCEEDINGS –	***All proceedings should continue to proceed via Zoom where possible.***
	All initial appearances, arraignments, pleas, and sentencings shall continue to proceed via Zoom. Where the defendant has not consented to proceed by way of videoconference for an initial appearance, arraignment, plea, or sentencing, the proceeding shall be held in-person regardless of whether the defendant is in or out of custody.
	Bench trials shall be conducted via Zoom where possible.
GRAND JURY	The first Grand Jury selection shall take place October 27 th (Judge McNulty) with further selections to take place in Camden on November 9 th (Judge Hillman), in Trenton on November 17 th (Judge Martinotti), and an additional selection in Newark is tentatively scheduled for December 1 st . The November and December selections are pending a successful selection in Newark in October.
COURTHOUSES	A reevaluation of the maximum elevator occupancy restrictions shall be delegated to the local FSCs based on elevator size and the needs of each respective courthouse. The Trenton elevator modernization project will reduce the number of elevators in the Trenton Courthouse Annex to three.
	The jury assembly room and any other applicable large conference areas shall be marked for 6-foot social distancing and shall reopen on an ad hoc basis (i.e., Grand Jury selections).
	The reopening of gyms shall be delegated to the local FSCs.
	Thermal scanners shall be placed at designated entry points for all three courthouses upon the successful completion of the Trenton pilot program (specific placement points to be handled by the local FSCs). <i>See also</i> the proposed Temperature Screening Protocols as well as proposed Standing Orders 2020-14 and 2020-15.
	PPE supply quantities shall be evaluated to ensure adequacy of current stock and projected need due to anticipated future increased volume in the courthouses for Grand Jury selections, etc.

CHAMBERS	Each Judge shall determine his/her respective volume of courtroom activity. It is also imperative that all in-person courtroom proceedings be coordinated through the Clerk's Office to ensure appropriate post-proceeding cleaning and social distancing accommodations. Although Phase III provides for an increase in proceedings, it is still imperative that the number of proceedings remain limited during this Phase.
	Each respective Judge shall determine his/her in-person staffing of Chambers, including interns.

U.S. BANKRUPTCY COURT	
U.S. BANKRUPTCY COURT	Staff coverage will remain the same.
	Bankruptcy and U.S. Trustees proceedings will not proceed in-person due to the number of people that come in for the hearings.
	The designated courtrooms will be outfitted with plexiglass.

PHASE III PROTOCOL

**Unless otherwise noted below, the Phase II protocols will remain in effect.*

PHASE III PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: October 1, 2020 thru January 4, 2021

U.S. AGENCIES	
U.S. PROBATION	In-office staff coverage shall remain the same.
	Probation anticipates a slight increase in the number of offenders entering the courthouses.
U.S. PRETRIAL SERVICES	In-office staff coverage shall remain minimal.
	Pretrial anticipates that there may be a slight increase in foot traffic into the buildings.
USMS	Staff coverage will increase starting September 14 th .
	Should the need arise to house prisoners or detainees in the USMS cellblock or holding cells, inmates will be limited to one per cell, masks will be provided to prisoners, and GSA will provide enhanced cleaning of the cellblock area.
GSA	All frequently touched areas throughout the building and the designated courtrooms will be cleaned and disinfected as they were in Phase II. As Chambers are beginning to repopulate, GSA reminds everyone that all office space will be cleaned by a work order request to their O&M contractor.
	GSA is working to ensure the ventilation exchange rates are being performed according to CDC guidance. GSA is increasing outside air exchange 2 hours prior to building operating hours and 2 hours after operating hours. The systems are set to exchange the air at a rate of 7 cycles per hour.
	GSA has installed Merv 13 (Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value) in designated courtrooms in the Region 3 (Camden and Trenton) courthouses. GSA has ordered the Merv filters for the remaining air handlers for both buildings which are due in over the next few weeks. The Region 2 Courthouses and buildings have received and installed Merv 13 filters for all air handler units in the MLK Building.