

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT

FILED
DISTRICT COURT
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NEW HAVEN

IN RE:
COURT OPERATIONS UNDER THE EXIGENT
CIRCUMSTANCES CREATED BY COVID-19

GENERAL ORDER

WHEREAS, the Court continues to review its operations to identify measures that will help protect court employees and the public from the COVID-19 virus (coronavirus), while at the same time preserving its core mission of serving the public through the fair and impartial administration of justice;

WHEREAS, in May, 2021, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued guidance indicating that fully vaccinated individuals do not need to wear masks in certain indoor public settings when not required by state or local law;

WHEREAS, on May 20, 2021, the Governor of the State of Connecticut issued Executive Order No. 12A permitting fully vaccinated persons to choose not to wear masks in certain indoor public settings;

WHEREAS, the Court's ongoing review of its operations includes monitoring of vaccination and COVID-19 positivity rates in Connecticut and surrounding areas, and consultation with its retained science advisor;

And WHEREAS, given the current low level of prevalence of the COVID-19 virus in the State of Connecticut and the relatively high level of vaccinations among Connecticut residents,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, **effective immediately and until further order of the Court**, that:

1. This order supersedes the General Orders entered on March 29, 2021. For purposes of this order, "fully vaccinated" means that at least 14 days have elapsed from the second shot of a two-dose vaccine or the first shot of a single-dose vaccine.
2. *Distancing*. All persons entering a federal courthouse in this District (including the Bankruptcy Court facility and Probation and Pretrial Services Office located at 157

Church Street, New Haven) and court employees shall maintain 6 feet of distance from each other at all times in public spaces, including but not limited to courtrooms, hallways, bathrooms, Clerk's Office public counter/intake area, Probation Office reception, elevators, and stairwells.

3. *Unvaccinated Persons and Masks.* Persons entering a federal courthouse in this District and court employees **who have not been fully vaccinated** must wear at least one mask that is effective to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus (e.g., N95, KN95, KF94, cloth masks, or medical masks, in all cases covering the nose and mouth). Unvaccinated persons shall wear masks at all times in public spaces, including but not limited to courtrooms, hallways, bathrooms, Clerk's Office public counter/intake area, Probation Office reception, elevators, and stairwells.
4. *Fully Vaccinated Persons and Masks.* Persons entering a federal courthouse in this District and court employees **who have been fully vaccinated** need not wear a mask in public spaces in the courthouse, except in courtrooms, which are addressed below, and except in the case of prospective jurors present for jury selections, who may be present together in large groups for long periods of time. **Any person who chooses not to wear a mask while present in a public space in the courthouse will be deemed thereby to attest to the fact that he or she has been fully vaccinated.** Any fully vaccinated person who wants to wear a mask may do so; unless the presiding judge orders otherwise, masks are optional for fully vaccinated persons.
5. *Courtrooms.* Unless the presiding judge orders otherwise, persons who have been fully vaccinated need not wear masks in the courtroom. Circumstances in which a presiding judge may decide to order some or all persons present, whether fully vaccinated or not, to wear masks include, without limitation, jury selections, jury trials, and other proceedings where large numbers of persons are present together for sustained periods of time or where persons are not able to maintain six feet of distance from each other. The presiding judge may, in his or her discretion, choose to require persons attending court proceedings to show proof of full vaccination.
6. *No Entry in Certain Situations.* Notwithstanding any of the foregoing, no person may enter any courthouse in this District who fits any of the following descriptions: (1) *For unvaccinated persons:* Within the past 14 days, (1) the person has experienced fever or

flu-like symptoms (including persistent headache or sort throat) or the loss of the sense of taste or smell, (2) the person has tested positive for COVID-19, (3) the person has had close contact – meaning closer than 6 feet for more than 15 minutes cumulative over a 24-hour period – with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19, or (4) the person has traveled outside the United States. *For fully vaccinated persons:* (1) the person is currently experiencing fever or flu-like symptoms (including persistent headache or sort throat) or the loss of the sense of taste or smell, (2) within the past 14 days, the person has tested positive for COVID-19 or traveled outside the United States, but such a person may enter if the person shows proof at the courthouse entrance of a negative COVID-19 test performed after arrival in the United States and within the past two days.

7. *Clerk's Office.* The Clerk's Office will be open to the public, but Clerk's Office staff may limit the numbers of persons in the intake counter area to allow for appropriate distancing. The Clerk's office will not accept cash payments.

This order is based in part on the current low prevalence of the COVID-19 virus in the communities served by the Court. Should there be an increase in positivity rates in these communities, the Court may revisit this order and may need to re-introduce masking and other requirements, even for fully vaccinated persons.

SO ORDERED:

Dated: July 19, 2021
Bridgeport, CT

/s/ Stefan R. Underhill

Stefan R. Underhill
Chief United States District Judge