



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

Office of the District Court Executive

LAURA TAYLOR SWAIN
Chief Judge

EDWARD A. FRIEDLAND
District Court Executive

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Public
FROM: The SDNY COVID Response Team
DATE: March 23, 2022
SUBJECT: UPDATED GUIDELINES REGARDING COVID-19 COURTROOM PROTOCOLS

The following COVID-19 Courtroom Protocols apply to all courthouses in the Southern District of New York:

MASK AND DISTANCE PROTOCOL

All individuals in public spaces in the courthouse, including jurors, must wear an N95, KN95 or KF94 mask at all times, except judges while speaking on the bench, witnesses while testifying, and attorneys while speaking from a podium in a courtroom. Surgical masks, cloth masks, bandannas, gaiters and masks with valves are still not permitted.

Individuals are not required to wear a mask if they are in a closed space not generally accessible by members of the public (e.g., judicial chambers, robing rooms, conference rooms, gym), and they either (i) work in the courthouse; or (ii) have been given permission to remove their mask by a judicial officer or Court Unit Executive. Those who have had exposure to someone with COVID-19 should continue to wear a mask until they receive a negative test result.¹

Individuals are not required to maintain distance from one another in the courtroom or in spaces adjacent to the courtroom, such as the robing room and the jury deliberation room, except that during meals in the jury deliberation room, jurors are required to maintain an approximate six-foot distance.

¹ Unvaccinated individuals and those who have not received a booster shot when eligible to do so must continue to stay out of the courthouse for 14 days following exposure to an individual with COVID-19. Please see [COVID-19 Protocols Following Symptoms or Exposure to COVID-19](#) for additional information about when you may return to the courthouse following symptoms or exposure.

JUDGES' BENCH

Judges may remove their masks when speaking from the bench. Judges and testifying witnesses should not be unmasked at the same time.

PODIUMS

It is no longer necessary to have a waiting period in between speakers or to wipe the surface of the podium with disinfecting wipes.

Use of the filter-equipped plexiglass enclosures is no longer required. At the discretion of the presiding judge, counsel may remove their masks once they have reached the podium regardless of counsel's vaccination status, provided the podium is at least 6-feet away from others. The testing protocol for unmasked speakers that was established on January 21, 2022 is no longer in place.

WITNESS STAND

It is no longer necessary to have a waiting period in between witnesses or to wipe the surface of the witness stand with disinfecting wipes.

Use of the filter-equipped plexiglass enclosures is no longer required. At the discretion of the presiding judge, witnesses may remove their masks for testimony once on the witness stand regardless of the witness' vaccination status, provided the witness stand is at least 6-feet away from others. The testing protocol for unmasked speakers that was established on January 21, 2022 is no longer in place.

EXHIBITS

Court exhibits admitted into evidence are no longer required to be in electronic format. Hard copies of exhibits can be presented to the sitting jurors during deliberations.

ELEVATORS

Please refer to posted signs on elevator doors for capacity limits.