

**IN THE COURTS OF THE FIRST JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 2021-36**

**RE: COURT PROTOCOLS IN LIGHT OF CURRENT COVID-19 CONDITIONS
(VACATES ESCAMBIA COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTIVE 2020-08 and
SANTA ROSA COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTIVE 2020-01)**

WHEREAS, in response to the public health emergency caused by the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the Supreme Court of Florida has issued a series of administrative orders to ensure the safe administration of justice throughout the State; and

WHEREAS, the courts of the First Judicial Circuit continue to operate in conformity with those orders; and

WHEREAS, AOSC 21-17, Amendment 2, was issued on November 4, 2021, and took effect at 12:01 a.m. on November 15, 2021; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of the Chief Judge to continue to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in accordance with the orders of the Supreme Court of Florida, while keeping the courts operating to the fullest extent consistent with public safety;

NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority of the Chief Judge, under section 43.26, Florida Statutes, and Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.215,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, effective immediately:

- 1) A court may not require the wearing of face masks or physical distancing, unless required by a binding law, rule, regulation, or order. However, a person in a courthouse may choose to wear a face mask, and a face mask must be provided upon request to a participant or observer. Participants may request to be physically distanced, and the court should address any such requests as appropriate under the circumstances at the time of the request.

- 2) Hearings to determine whether an individual should be involuntarily committed under the Baker Act or the Marchman Act must be conducted in person unless that individual waives the right to physical presence at the hearing.
- 3) All jury trials shall be conducted in person, unless consent is provided as directed in Section II.E.(3) of AOSC 21-17, Amendment 2.
- 4) Each judge may determine, in his or her discretion and on a case-by-case basis, whether it is appropriate to continue the remote conduct of trial court proceedings with the use of technology, in accordance with this administrative order. For purposes of this order, “remote conduct” means the conduct, in part or in whole, of a court proceeding using telephonic or other electronic means.
- 5) Escambia County Administrative Directive 2020-08 and Santa Rosa County Administrative Directive 2020-01 are **VACATED**.

DONE AND ORDERED in Pensacola, Escambia County, Florida this 17th day of December, 2021.

/s/ JOHN L. MILLER

JOHN L. MILLER
CHIEF JUDGE

Copies of AO2021-36 provided to:
All Judges, First Judicial Circuit
All Clerks, First Judicial Circuit
Ginger Madden, State Attorney, First Judicial Circuit
Kasey Watson, Public Information Officer, First Judicial Circuit
Bruce Miller, Public Defender, First Judicial Circuit
Robin Wright, Trial Court Administrator
Elizabeth Miller, Child Welfare Legal Services
Bryan Carter, Guardian Ad Litem
Mark Jones, President of Family First Network
Kayshala Patterson, Chief Probation Officer for Florida Department of Juvenile Justice
Justice Administrative Commission
Candice Brower, Office of Criminal Conflict Counsel
Craig Waters, Director of Public Information, Florida Supreme Court

For Broadcast by: Escambia-Santa Rosa Bar Association
For Broadcast by: Okaloosa County Bar Association

For Broadcast by: Walton County Bar Association
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