

STATE OF MINNESOTA

DISTRICT COURT

COUNTY OF RAMSEY

SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT

**In re Second Judicial District Court, Ramsey
County, Remote Hearings During COVID-19
Pandemic**

WHEREAS, it is the Court's responsibility to ensure the proper, safe, and orderly administration of justice throughout Ramsey County and Second Judicial District Court facilities; and,

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, the President of the United States proclaimed a national emergency in response to the outbreak of the infectious disease known as COVID-19; and,

WHEREAS, on the same day, the Governor of the State of Minnesota issued Emergency Executive Order 20-01, declaring a peacetime emergency in response to COVID-19; and,

WHEREAS, as of November 17, 2020, the State of Minnesota has recorded more than 230,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and almost 3,000 deaths related to COVID-19; and,

WHEREAS, as of November 14, 2020, the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resources Center reports that Minnesota has a COVID-19 test positivity rate of 14.2, with surrounding states of South Dakota, North Dakota, Iowa and Wisconsin, with positivity rates of 58.8, 15.7, 52.6, and 17.7 respectively, also recording the four largest statewide increases in case counts in the first week of November; and,

WHEREAS, as of November 12, 2020, the 14-day COVID-19 case rate in Ramsey County has tripled since September 6, 2020, to a rate of 49.95; and,

WHEREAS, notwithstanding all the precautions and safety measures taken by the Minnesota justice system, we must continue to increase protective measures and minimize human contact to ensure that safety of court personnel, justice partners, litigants, and the public; and,

WHEREAS, reducing the number of in-person hearings is an effective way of reducing the threat COVID-19 presents to court personnel, justice partners, litigants, and the public; and,

WHEREAS, the Second Judicial District justice partners support the reduction of in-person hearings; and,

WHEREAS, Ramsey County Sheriff's Office (RCSO) operates the Adult Detention Center (ADC); the District's only pre-trial detention facility; and,

WHEREAS, the RCSO has implemented numerous measures to control and manage the spread of COVID-19 within the ADC, and has agreed to support the District in minimizing the spread of the virus by reducing in-person court appearances for in-custody defendants.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the Second Judicial District, Ramsey County, will begin the process of reducing in-person hearings in criminal matters.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the transition from in-person hearings will be phased-in beginning with cases appearing at the Law Enforcement Center on arraignments, initial appearances, non-contested probation violations, and non-contested omnibus hearings.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the transition must provide for defendants to have access to their attorneys in a safe, timely, meaningful and confidential manner.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that detainees shall not be brought from the ADC to appear in person in Court, except for trials, other contested hearings, or as otherwise ordered.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that detainees not appearing in person shall appear in Court via a virtual platform approved by this Court.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office supply the ADC with necessary equipment and technology to effectively and efficiently conduct in-custody hearings from within the ADC via a virtual platform approved by the Court.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Second Judicial District court operations will minimize all in-person hearings while ensuring the fair and timely administration of criminal, juvenile, civil and family cases for the benefit of defendants, victims and the public.

This Order is effective immediately and shall remain in effect until further Order of this Court.

Dated: November 18, 2020

BY THE COURT:



Leonardo Castro
Chief Judge
Second Judicial District

