

Hon. Kaydee N. Snipes Ruiz
Montana District Court Judge
Twelfth Judicial District Court
315 4th Street
Havre MT 59501

MONTANA TWELFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
HILL, CHOUTEAU, AND LIBERTY COUNTIES
BEFORE THE HONORABLE KAYDEE N. SNIPES RUIZ

IN RE: CORONAVIRUS /
COVID-19

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**PROCEDURES FOR
IN- PERSON APPEARANCE
DURING PHASE I**

The Courthouses in Hill, Chouteau, and Liberty counties have experienced courthouse closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Hill County Courthouse is reopening, and Court will reconvene in-person appearances in the Hill County Courtroom on **May 11, 2020**.

Chouteau County and Liberty County Courthouses will resume in-person appearances upon further approval by local health officials and upon further announcement of the Court.

Pursuant to the Montana Supreme Court's April 22, 2020 Memo regarding COVID-19, and Governor Bullock's April 22, 2020 phased reopening of Montana Directive, and for the health and safety of Court staff and litigants, and good cause appearing therefore, **IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:**

Until further Order from the Court, the following procedures for in-person appearance before the Twelfth Judicial District shall apply:

1. Physical distancing of no less than 6 feet in the Courtroom and waiting area shall be maintained. Chairs will be appropriately spaced and marked with green indicators—parties are required to sit in chairs with the green indicators.
2. Hand sanitizer will be available for public use near the entryway of the Courtroom and at Counsel table. Generous use is encouraged.
3. Unless it is a closed proceeding, the door to the District Court will be left open to reduce high contact with the doorknob. Parties utilizing the waiting area outside the Courtroom will maintain low volume to not disturb ongoing Court proceedings.
4. When Court is in recess, Court staff will be sanitizing high contact areas in the Courtroom. Cleaning solutions take approximately 10 minutes to fully sanitize non-porous hard surfaces. Therefore, to facilitate this cleaning, parties shall remain behind the partition when Court is in recess.
5. Parties will be instructed to wipe their chairs and tables after their respective case is completed before exiting the Courtroom.
6. Unless otherwise Ordered by the Court, all parties, attorneys, witnesses, spectators, and staff personally appearing in the Courtroom are required to wear masks covering the nose and mouth in accord with CDC recommendations. Counsel of Record is responsible for informing clients and witnesses of this requirement.

7. To reduce personal contact with Exhibits and proposed Orders, when possible and practicable, parties are encouraged to provide the Court's judicial assistant with a digital copy of the document ahead of the hearing date for the Court's review.
8. Pursuant to the Court's Emergency Administrative Order issued March 18, 2020, all other non-contradictory provisions shall remain in effect, including
 - a. **general encouragement and preference for virtual appearance** either via Judicial Video Network or telephone; and
 - b. **general encouragement and preference for fax-filing and email-filing documents with the Clerk of Court.**

Said Order can be found at: <https://courts.mt.gov/Portals/189/virus/local/12.pdf>.

The Court will continue to assess the public health situation as it progresses and evolves during the pendency of this Order. The Court may vacate, amend, or continue these procedures as circumstances require.

The undersigned certainly understands the inconvenience these rules may cause and the substantial additional work that will be required to implement them. The Court thus thanks staff, counsel, parties, and the public in general for their understanding during this challenging and uncertain time. Your cooperation in promoting the health and safety of all is greatly appreciated.

Dated this 27th day of April, 2020.



HON. KAYDEE M. SNIPES RUIZ
District Judge