

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Delaware Courts to restore mask mandate on Monday, August 16, 2021  
to combat the COVID-19 Delta variant**

*Chief Justice also orders mandatory weekly COVID testing  
for all unvaccinated court employees*

Delaware Supreme Court Chief Justice Collins J. Seitz, Jr., as administrative head of all state courts, today announced that the Delaware Judicial Branch will be once again requiring masks at all State court facilities beginning on Monday, August 16, 2021. The administrative order signed today also mandates that beginning on September 7, 2021, any court employee who is not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 must undergo weekly COVID testing.

Both the mask order and testing mandate are needed in the interest of public health and safety due to the surge in COVID-19 Delta variant cases in Delaware. The mask order will apply to all visitors to state judicial facilities and all judicial branch employees. The only exception will be in courtrooms when a participant in a court proceeding is speaking or for employees in their own offices or in a socially distant work area. The testing requirement is for all employees who have not provided proof of full vaccination. Once proof of full vaccination is provided, the weekly testing can be discontinued.

This policy change comes following Governor John Carney's August 10 announcement that state employees and visitors to Delaware state facilities, regardless of vaccination status, must wear masks indoors starting Monday, August 16. The Governor also stated that additional requirements around vaccination and testing for state employees and others will be announced in the coming days. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, all Delaware counties presently have "high" levels of community transmission of COVID-19. The Chief Justice has also been consulting with the Courts' infections disease expert, Dr. Alfred Bacon. While the vaccine protects individuals against the most serious symptoms of COVID-19 – including hospitalization and death – the emerging science indicates that the Delta variant is highly transmissible and vaccinated people may be asymptomatic carriers of the Delta variant. This means vaccinated people may unknowingly infect those who are unvaccinated such as children under 12 who are not yet eligible for the vaccine and those who may be immunocompromised or others not fully vaccinated.

The Delaware Courts previously imposed a mask mandate at the start of the pandemic but lifted that restriction for fully vaccinated individuals on July 1, 2021.

"We promised judicial branch employees and the public that we would monitor COVID-19 conditions in Delaware and, if needed, would not hesitate to make changes in the interest of public health and safety" said Chief Justice Seitz. "As the CDC and Governor Carney have stated, the Delta variant has recently changed conditions on the ground. Many judicial branch

employees and the public must come to judicial facilities every day. They have no choice. We needed to take immediate action to protect our employees and the public from the highly contagious nature of the Delta variant. Vaccines are still the best defense against COVID-19 and the Delta variant. The best way to end this pandemic is to get vaccinated,” he said.

The Delaware Judicial Branch continues to operate normally, though the Chief Justice has encouraged courts to continue to use remote proceedings developed during the pandemic when possible.

You can see the full court order here: <https://courts.delaware.gov/rules/pdf/COVIDtesting.pdf>