

**THE SUPREME COURT of OHIO****THE COURTS & LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH**  
**Their Respective Roles in a Community Public Health Crisis**

The courts and local public health are essential partners in a community crisis. The courts' ability to issue legally binding orders, make decisions to guide public officials, and resolve urgent disputes will keep the community safe and abate panic in the community. It is essential local public health officials, judges, and court staff work together to maintain court operations in a public health crisis.

The following are practical tips in the COVID-19 crisis for court operations:

1. Schedule a meeting or telephone conference between the courts' administrative judges, court administrators, and the public health director. Exchange contact information.
2. Judges should identify:
  - a. Essential daily court functions.
  - b. Staff needed to carry out essential court functions.
  - c. Alternative staff that carry out essential court functions as necessary.
  - d. Normal court functions that can be delayed during a crisis.
  - e. Court functions that can be carried out using available technology to alleviate face-to-face contact among litigants, attorneys, judge, and staff.
  - f. Facility limitations that make face-to-face contact unavoidable.
3. Local public health should be able to advise judges and court staff:
  - a. Nature of the public health crisis, including:
    - i. The nature of local cases.
    - ii. Communicability and mode of transmission of the disease.
    - iii. Symptoms of the disease.
  - b. Reasonable precautionary measures to protect court staff in view of the nature of necessary court functions.
  - c. Social distancing when face-to-face contact is unavoidable and local facilities available to accommodate the court if its facilities cannot be modified to meet social-distancing recommendations.
4. Communicate plans developed to maintain essential court operations and the basis for those decisions to the public.

Working together, the courts and local public health agencies, along with other crisis management partners in the community, will keep the public safe and maintain public trust that their officials are working hard to keep them safe.

- For the latest information on COVID-19, go to: [coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov).
- For questions related to court operations and options, contact the Ohio Supreme Court at [stephanie.hess@sc.ohio.gov](mailto:stephanie.hess@sc.ohio.gov).