

FILED
in the Middle District of
North Carolina
3/8/2022
10:54 a.m.
Clerk, US District Court
By: JSB

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA**

**IN RE:)
COURT OPERATIONS UNDER THE EXIGENT) STANDING ORDER 13
CIRCUMSTANCES CREATED BY COVID-19) (AMENDED)**

This Court has issued several standing orders to ensure continued operations since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. E.g., Standing Order 12 (providing restrictions on entrants to the courthouses); Standing Order 13 (limited in-person contact, encouraged proceedings by video, and extended Speedy Trial deadlines through April 2, 2021); Standing Order 14 (allowing CJA Panel attorneys to file interim vouchers); Standing Order 15 (allowing video- and tele-conferencing in criminal cases under the CARES Act through May 2, 2022); and Standing Order 16 (providing guidelines for court hearings during COVID-19 restrictions). In so doing, the Court has consulted the recommendations of the public health authorities.

Public health authorities, including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, now recommend optional indoor mask wearing for counties with Low and Medium COVID-19 Community Levels. As of now, the counties of our court facilities report virus levels such that masking should no longer be required. This is consistent with the progress of vaccinations and recommendations by the state and local governments. In light of this,

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. All prior requirements that individuals wear facial masks in common areas of courthouses for Covid-19 reasons are SUSPENDED. Masks are OPTIONAL.

2. This Order does not preclude Judges, Court Unit Executives, and individual federal employers from setting their own masking and other guidance for their own employees and anyone within their own workspaces.
3. Judges may implement their own mask requirement during their own court hearings, including events involving larger gatherings of participants (e.g., naturalization ceremonies) and jury trials.
4. Grand jury proceedings will continue at the discretion of and in the manner prescribed by the United States Attorney.
5. Amended Standing Orders 12, 14, and 16 are hereby RESCINDED.
6. Anyone desiring an accommodation for any proceeding or matter because of a pandemic-related health reason should apply to the Presiding Judge for relief.

SO ORDERED.

This the 8th day of March, 2022.

 /s/ Thomas D. Schroeder
Chief United States District Judge
FOR THE COURT