



## Supreme Court of Florida

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### **Chief Justice acts to lift courtroom restrictions, continue remote proceedings, and sets dates to resume speedy trial**

TALLAHASSEE – Chief Justice Charles Canady today issued [an order](#) allowing courts around Florida to lift requirements to wear masks and distance from others while in courtrooms during proceedings. Improved health measurements, increased vaccination rates, and updated official health guidance all prompted the changes.

“At this time, effective vaccines for COVID-19 are adequately available in Florida for persons ages 12 and older; almost half of this state’s population has been partially or fully vaccinated; and government-issued health standards and guidance provide that fully vaccinated persons do not need to wear face masks or physically distance in most indoor and outdoor settings unless required by federal, state, or local laws, rules, or regulations,” the administrative order states.

The order prioritizes jury trials, with criminal trials taking precedence, by directing most other proceedings be conducted remotely to focus facility and other resources on in-person trials.

“Trial court proceedings shall continue to be remotely conducted, as appropriate, to facilitate the efficient and expeditious processing of cases,” the order states.

Chief judges may drop the mask and distancing requirements in courtrooms during proceedings as soon as June 21, and no later than August 2.

The order further sets a schedule to end the current suspension of speedy trial and extends the emergency authority for remote proceedings.

In March 2020, most in-person court events were suspended because of the dangers posed by COVID-19. Emergency orders issued by Canady allowed for the remote conduct of any court event that could be held that way. Florida's courts continued to work, using video and phone conferencing to hold court events even through restrictions on in-person proceedings. Judges around the state are expected to dispose of 3 million cases in 2020-2021 by the conclusion of the fiscal year later this month.

Speedy trial provisions will resume October 4 for adult defendants taken into custody before March 14, 2020, and for juveniles. For adult defendants taken into custody after March 14, 2020, speedy trial provisions will resume January 3, 2022.

Chief Justice Canady issued the order under his authority as the chief administrative officer of the State Courts System. In 2020 he created the Workgroup on the Continuity of Court Operations and Proceedings During and After COVID-19. Today's order reflects recommendations made by the Workgroup.

All state court coronavirus emergency orders and advisories are linked on the Florida Supreme Court's website:

<https://www.floridasupremecourt.org/Emergency>

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