



## **DISTRICT COURT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS ATTORNEY PROTOCOLS**

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The District Court of the Virgin Islands has developed Attorney Protocols for in-court matters. This guidance is provided to facilitate proceedings while maintaining social distancing, facial covering and other protocols.

### **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

- Attorneys should adhere to social distancing signage during entry screening.
- All attorneys, witnesses and staff will be required to wear face masks/coverings in all common and public areas of the Almeric L. Christian Federal Building and Courthouse and the Ron de Lugo Federal Building and Courthouse. Masks may be removed only outside of the Federal Buildings.
- Should the face covering be deemed unsuitable, a face mask will be provided.
- The use of gloves by attorneys is permissible but not mandatory.
- Social distancing will be employed with all proceedings.
- Limited social distancing is optional for counsel tables to accommodate attorneys, parties or their representatives, case agents and staff.

### **COURTHOUSES**

- Attorneys will report to the scheduled courtrooms of the Almeric L. Christian Federal Building and Courthouse and the Ron de Lugo Federal Building and Courthouse, as applicable.
- Each courtroom has been configured to adhere to social distancing protocols.
- Courtroom Deputies will instruct attorneys and staff where to sit in the courtroom pursuant to the seating layout provided by the Court.

### **COURT EQUIPMENT**

- Microphone covers will be provided for all microphones in the courtroom.
- Attorneys will present their case from counsel table.
- The Elmo will be available for attorney use only if necessary.
- Headsets will be provided for sidebar discussions as determined by the presiding judicial officer.
- The podium will not be available for use.



## EXHIBITS

- The use of exhibits in electronic form is required except in those exceptional cases where use of the exhibit was not, and could not have been, reasonably anticipated.
- Attorneys will present the exhibits from counsel table.
- The handling of exhibits for witnesses testifying remotely will be determined by the presiding judicial officer.
- For jury trials, attorneys shall submit photos of potential witnesses for use during *voir dire*.
- Attorneys may use the Elmo document camera in those exceptional cases in which the exhibits are not displayed electronically.

## WITNESSES

- Trial witnesses will be introduced during *voir dire* via photographs.
- Witnesses will be required to wear their face covering into the courtroom.
- Witnesses will remove the face covering after being sworn and seated at the witness stand.
- Witnesses are required to wear the face covering whenever they are outside of the witness stand.
- At the conclusion of their testimony, witnesses will put on the face covering before leaving the witness stand.
- Waiting Areas
  - In St. Croix, the witnesses will wait in the witness and attorney rooms outside of the respective courtroom where social distancing will be employed. A maximum of 4 persons will be allowed per room.
  - In St. Thomas, the witnesses will wait in the Jury Assembly Room where social distancing will be employed. A maximum of 12 persons will be allowed.

## SANITIZATION

- Hand sanitizer, wipes, tissues and waste receptacles will be provided for attorney use.
- After each witness, the courtroom deputy will be required to sanitize the witness box and change the microphone cover.
- After each use, attorneys are responsible for cleaning the area of the Elmo.
- Microphone covers at counsel tables will be replaced daily by Courtroom Deputies.
- General Court equipment will be sanitized by Court personnel daily.
- Janitorial services will clean the courtroom daily and high touch areas within the Federal Buildings several times per day.