

VAN BUREN COUNTY – ALL COURT POLICY (36th Circuit Court, 7th District Court and Van Buren County Probate Courts)		
SUBJECT: Public Health Emergency Operations Plan / Policy	SECTION: Administration	DATE: 04/12/2022
PREPARED BY: Rachel Lindley, Ryan Smith, and Ann Stamm	NUMBER: Policy 2.006	RESCINDS: 3/17/2020, 3/24/2020, 4/14/2020, 4/29/2020, 5/13/2020, 5/27/2020, 6/10/2020, 7/20/2020, 9/23/2020, 11/18/2020, 2/1/2021, 2/26/2021, 3/30/2021, 4/06/2021, 5/28/2021, 6/10/2021, 6/23/2021, 08/23/2021, 2/23/2022

REFERENCES:

- [MDHHS Masking Guidance](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Policy 4.002 Digital Audio-Video Recordings of Court Proceedings](#)
- [Van Buren County Court Virtual Court Information](#)
- [Return to Full Capacity-Covid-19 Guidelines for Michigan’s Judiciary](#)

Van Buren County Courts are open to conduct court operations Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The courts will continue to address after hour matters using established protocols. Visitors entering the building will no longer be subject to COVID-19 screening procedures. Though the [Return to Full Capacity Guide](#) was rescinded on 06/21/2021, SCAO encourages courts to work closely with their local public health department to implement safety protocols. This action is being taken to:

- Follow recommendations from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) and [Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#) (MIOSHA) and the Van Buren Cass County Health Department.
- Comply with the [Michigan Court Rules](#).
- Combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Reduce the risk posed to the public, court staff, and others, while protecting public safety and the legal rights of our citizens.

PROCEDURES

A. Contact Information

Patrons may call, email, or visit the court using the information below. Messages and emails are being addressed daily.

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|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. 36 th Circuit Court: | Mail: 212 E. Paw Paw Street, Suite 212
Paw Paw, MI 49079
Email: 36circuitcourt@vanburencountymi.gov
Phone: (269) 657-8200 ext. 2340 |
| a. County Clerk: | Mail: 212 E. Paw Paw Street, Suite 101
Paw Paw, MI 49079
Email: clerk@vanburencountymi.gov
Phone: (269) 657-8218 Option 6 |
| b. Friend of the Court (FOC): | Mail: 219 E. Paw Paw Street
Paw Paw, MI 49079
Email: foc@vanburencountymi.gov
Phone: (269) 657-7734 |
| c. Juvenile Court: | Mail: 212 E. Paw Paw Street, Suite 240
Paw Paw, MI 49079
Email: juvenile@vanburencountymi.gov
Phone: (269) 657-8237 |

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|------------------------------------|---|
| 2. 7 th District Court: | Mail: 212 E. Paw Paw Street, Suite 130
Paw Paw, MI 49079
Email: 7dc@vanburencountymi.gov
Phone: (269) 657-8222 |
| 3. Probate Court: | Mail: 212 E. Paw Paw Street, Suite 220
Paw Paw, MI 49079
Email: probate@vanburencountymi.gov
Phone: (269) 657-8225 |
| 4. Specialty Court: | Mail: 212 E. Paw Paw Street, Suite LL101
Paw Paw, MI 49079
Email: specialtycourts@vanburencountymi.gov
Phone: (269) 657-8200 ext. 2478 |

B. General

1. Proceedings will be conducted virtually to the greatest extent possible, consistent with [Court Rule 6.006](#). In-person proceedings will be allowed on a limited basis at the judicial officer's discretion.
2. Courtrooms and hearing rooms will be open to the public.
3. For more information about remote proceedings see our [Virtual Court Information](#) page on our website.
4. Face coverings and social distancing are recommended in courtrooms and hearing rooms when people are present in accordance with the [MDHHS masking guidance](#).
5. The court will accept filings. The following methods may be used:
 - a. Using our [drop box location](#) near the building entrance at each court.
 - b. Mail using the United States Postal Service.
 - c. In-person at the locations listed in Section A above.
6. Scheduling notices will include the following verbiage:
Due to COVID-19 **PARTIES ARE NOT TO APPEAR IN PERSON**, unless ordered to do so by the presiding judicial officer, hearings will be conducted virtually to the greatest extent possible. You are instructed to use zoom and appear in Virtual Meeting Room ____ using meeting ID _____. Instructions to connect using zoom are attached. If you have any technical questions or are requesting to appear in person, please contact the court at least 3 days prior to your hearing by calling or emailing us at: _____.
7. The public or any party may immediately request a copy of the audio/video file pursuant to [Policy 4.002 Digital Audio-Video Recordings of Court Proceedings](#). Parties may request a copy by going to the [Request a Video or Transcript of a Hearing](#) page on our website. Each judicial officer, at his or her discretion, may live stream court proceedings on our YouTube channel. Any questions or concerns regarding live streaming may be directed to Melissa Williams at 269-657-8200 ext. 2345 or williamsm@vanburencountymi.gov
8. Instructions for joining a remote hearing, viewing live streamed hearings, or ordering copies of the audio/video file can be found on the [Virtual Court Information](#) page on our website. For specific guidelines, instructions and principles see form [VBC-0049 Guidelines for Virtual Hearings in Van Buren County Courts](#).

C. Payments

1. For details on payment options for criminal cases see form [VBC-0711 Payment Options](#). Court payments may be made as follows:
 - a. Online: visit [Court Payments Van Buren County, MI](#)

- b. Dropbox at court entry locations
- c. By mail, addresses can be found on the [Locations, Hours & Contact Information](#) page.

D. Probation / Caseworker Supervision

1. Supervision of clients may be conducted remotely using electronic communication or in person.
2. Off-site visits with probationers/case managers and clients may continue with face coverings and social distancing recommended.
3. On-site visits with probationers/case managers and clients may continue with face coverings and social distancing recommended.

E. Circuit Court

1. Criminal Matters

- a. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding remote appearance.
- b. Filings must be made with the county clerk's office by mail, or by using the drop box near the court entrance or in-person. The clerk's office contact information is as follows:
Email: clerk@vanburencountymi.gov
Phone: (269) 657-8218 Option 6
- c. If a party is filing a motion, the party must contact the court to arrange the date and time of the proceeding. If you have concerns about the communication, or if you wish to contact the court regarding scheduling, feel free to contact the court at:
Email: williamsm@vanburencountymi.gov
Phone: (269) 657-8200 ext. 2345

2. Civil Matters

- a. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding remote appearance.
- b. Filings must be made with the county clerk's office by mail, or by using the drop box near the court entrance or in-person. The clerk's office contact information is as follows:
Email: clerk@vanburencountymi.gov
Phone: (269) 657-8218 Option 6
- c. Upon receipt of filings, the court will be in communication with the filing party to arrange the date and time of the proceeding. If you have concerns about the communication, or if you wish to contact the court regarding scheduling, feel free to contact the court at:
Email: cowgillk@vanburencountymi.gov
Phone: (269) 657-8200 ext. 2213

3. Domestic Matters

- a. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding remote appearance.
- b. Filings must be made with the county clerk's office by mail, or by using the drop box near the court entrance or in-person. The clerk's office contact information is as follows:
Email: clerk@vanburencountymi.gov
Phone: (269) 657-8218 Option 6
- c. Upon receipt of filings, the court will be in communication with the filing party to arrange the date and time of the proceeding. If you have concerns about the communication, or if you wish to contact the court regarding scheduling, feel free to contact the court at:
Email: schmittm@vanburencountymi.gov
Phone: (269) 657-8200 ext. 2342

4. Friend of the Court (FOC)

- a. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding remote appearance.
- b. Specialized programs such as the 24/7 Dad and Do It for the Kids Workshop for Mom will be held remotely or in person.

c. If you have specific questions, contact the FOC at:

Email: foc@vanburencountymi.gov

Phone: (269) 657-7734

5. Juvenile (Delinquency / Neglect)

a. The Judicial Officers will process emergency proceedings using the normal on call weekly rotation.

b. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding remote appearance.

c. Filings must be made with the juvenile clerk's office by email, mail, by using the drop box near the court entrance, or in-person. The juvenile court clerk's contact information is as follows:

Email: juvenile@vanburencountymi.gov

Phone: (269) 657-8237

6. Personal Protection Orders (PPO's)

a. PPO Initiation – Filings must be made with the county clerk's office by mail, or by using the drop box near the court entrance or in-person. The clerk's office contact information is as follows:

Email: clerk@vanburencountymi.gov

Phone: (269) 657-8218 Option 6

b. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding remote appearance.

c. If you need assistance with filing, parties may contact Domestic Violence Coalition at:

Email: mhookerva1@live.com

Phone: 269-655-9008

d. Upon receipt of filings, the court will be in communication with the filing party to arrange the date and time of the proceeding. If you have concerns about the communication, or if you wish to contact the court regarding scheduling, feel free to contact the court at:

Email: kleins@vanburencountymi.gov

Phone: (269) 657-8200 ext. 2321

F. District Court

1. Criminal Matters - Misdemeanors & Felonies

a. On misdemeanors, the law enforcement agency will advise defendants of the court date and time of their next appearance by providing it directly on the citation. The court dates and times will be obtained in the Lexis Nexis system, or from Van Buren County Dispatch.

b. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language allowing remote appearance.

c. Filings must be made with the district court clerk's office by email, mail, by using the drop box near the court entrance, or in-person. Upon receipt of filings, the court will be in communication with the filing party to arrange the date and time of the proceeding. If you have concerns about the communication, or if you wish to contact the court regarding scheduling, feel free to contact the court at:

Email: 7dc@vanburencountymi.gov

Phone: (269) 657-8222

2. Civil Matters

a. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding remote appearance.

b. Filings – Filings must be made with the district court clerk's office by email, mail, by using the drop box near the court entrance, or in-person. Upon receipt of filings, the court will be in communication with the filing party to arrange the date and time of the proceeding. If you have concerns about the communication, or if you wish to contact the court regarding scheduling, feel free to contact the court at:

Email: 7dc@vanburencountymi.gov

Phone: (269) 657-8222

3. Civil Infractions / Tickets
 - a. Appearance / to pay dates will continue to be 10 days from issuance.
4. Wedding Ceremony/Services may be held with face coverings and social distancing recommended.

G. Probate Court

1. All matters
 - a. Parties will continue to receive notices of court dates. Notices will contain language regarding remote appearance.
 - b. Filings – Filings must be made with the probate court clerk’s office by email, mail, by using the drop box near the court entrance, or in-person. Upon receipt of filings, the court will be in communication with the filing party to arrange the date and time of the proceeding. If you have concerns about the communication, or if you wish to contact the court regarding scheduling, feel free to contact the court at:
Email: probate@vanburencountymi.gov
Phone: (269) 657-8225
2. GAL Reviews
 - a. All supervision of wards may be conducted remotely using electronic communication or in person.

H. Specialty Court

1. Court sessions will be held remotely or in person based on judicial discretion.
2. Client contacts and supervision should be held in-person by default with face coverings and social distancing recommended but may be remotely.
3. Drug testing will continue following guidance from CDC as needed.
4. If you have an emergency, you can contact the specialty court office at:
Email: specialtycourts@vanburencountymi.gov
Phone: (269) 657-8200 ext. 2478

FORMS

- [VBC-0711 Payment Options](#)
- [VBC-0049 Guidelines for Virtual Hearings in Van Buren County Court](#)

Effective Date: 4/12/2022

Date: 4/11/2022

Chief Judge Signature: 