



Judge Ramona A. Gonzalez
LA CROSSE COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT • BRANCH I
La Crosse County Courthouse & Law Enforcement Center
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La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601-3296

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March 18, 2022

La Crosse County COVID-19 risk level has dropped to **Low Level**. As we plan for return to some kind of normalcy, I am pleased to present our plan for this next phase. Please note this will be a time of transition and the next two weeks will be a time of change and adjustments.

In accordance with our commitment to work with the our County Stakeholders and the CDC Guidelines, now that we are at COVID-19 Low Risk Level, the Courthouse will be open to the public without requiring masks. Masks will be at the scanner if someone requests one but not required to enter the building. Each judge is in charge of his or her own courtroom and please see the signs posted outside of each courtroom for guidance.

All Branches will be open and available for in person appearances unless otherwise agreed to by the attorneys, except for Intake court appearances that will begin with the changes below as we transition to the next phase.

The following protocols and procedures shall begin with the next Intake in Branch 1 before Judge Gonzalez, Monday, March 21, 2022, assuming there are no changes in Risk Level:

- Masks will be optional as determined by the individual Intake Judge and the County Risk Level.
- Criminal Intake will remain via Zoom for now. In consultation with our criminal justice stakeholders, we will be coordinating to incorporate the lessons learned from our COVID experience to determine the best process for our Criminal Intake Calendar going forward.
- Intake Bond Review Hearings, other than for initial appearances, will be in person and shall be scheduled at 8:30am on Tuesday and Thursday with the DA's Office and defense attorneys also appearing in person. The non-Intake branches will not schedule in person appearances for in custody folks prior to 9:00am on these days.
- Prelims will be in person unless the defense attorneys arrange in advance for Zoom.

- The 10:45 Prelim Call Calendar will be replaced by a new procedure for monitoring the appointment of counsel for defendants addressing the statutory and constitutional rights of the defendants. All pending unassigned CF cases awaiting the appointment of counsel where the defendant is in custody will be scheduled for hearing and notices sent unless the motion is heard by Judge Doyle during her Intake. Judge Gonzalez will entertain motions to continue the prelim for good cause shown. All out of custody CF cases awaiting appointment of counsel and prelim will be reviewed by Judge Gonzalez and set for motion hearing or call from March 21 to April 1. The State and defendants must appear for those cases set for motion hearing. No appearances are required for those cases set for call. The Court will send out notices for all hearings.

Starting March 21, 2022, at the first appearance for defendants in CF cases who are unrepresented, the Court will entertain motions to find good cause to go beyond time limits for a preliminary hearing until appointment of counsel occurs. The judge may schedule a further motion or call hearing as appropriate for each case. Said motions and calls will be scheduled during the 2:00pm Intake calendar for out of custody defendants and 1:30pm Intake for defendants in custody. The SPD will continue to send letters indicating efforts made to find counsel for all cases on a monthly basis. The court may in any case, require more frequent letters on a particular case. The Court will advise defendants of their obligation to update their contact information with SPD, who must send them a copy of all letters sent to the court. The Court will add this Notice to the bond on these cases:

“You qualify for appointment of a State Public Defender (SPD) to represent you. They are making contacts with attorneys for this appointment. It may take some time to secure you an attorney. The court will periodically review the progress by the SPD office. You will be sent a notice to appear by the court if this process is taking too much time and you will be required to appear on the date and time indicated. Failure to appear may result in the issuance of a warrant for your arrest.”

- Traffic Intake will transition to in person hearings being the default but Zoom and telephone appearances will be available upon request. This will take some time as there are many cases already noticed for Zoom. In the meantime, the courtrooms will be open and prepared to accommodate those that choose to come in person.
- The Tuesday CPS calendar will also transition to in person appearances but will accommodate requests to appear by Zoom. All Notice of Hearings will continue to include Zoom log in information. The courtroom will be open and available to parties wishing to appear in person.

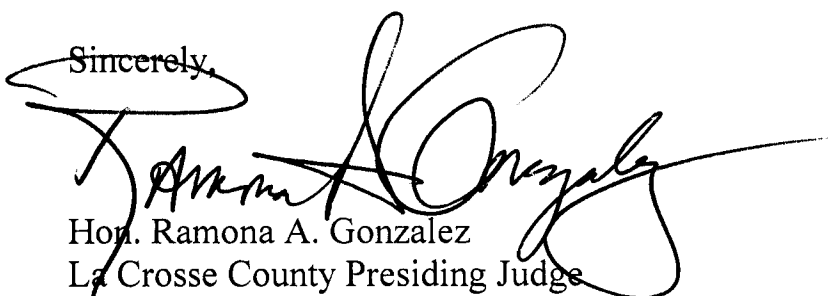
- The actions brought under Chapters 51, 54, and 55 will transition to in person court appearances commencing with Chapter 51 actions. The Notice for hearings will continue to include Zoom log in information but starting the first week in April 2022, the subjects for Chapter 51 Hearings will be transported to appear in person. Adversary Counsel can waive this appearance indicating the client's preference for appearing by Zoom. Chapter 54 and 55 hearings will continue to be held with Zoom unless the parties object.
- Beginning the first week in May 2022, the Family Court Commissioner (FCC) will begin to conduct contempt hearings for those who have failed to make their Child Support payments. These findings of contempt may result in short jail detentions until the FCC hears their case for release on Tuesdays at 3pm or Thursdays at 9:30am after their arrest. The regularly scheduled Child Support and Paternity calendars will continue as scheduled, and Zoom information provided for those who are unable to appear in person. Default Divorces in front of the FCC will remain by Zoom.

In recognition of the advantages of Zoom Court, appearances for many litigants' future court notices will include the opportunity for a party who is unable to appear in person to contact the Judge's Judicial Assistant to request an accommodation to appear by Zoom.

As to Jury Trials, the trials scheduled on March 14, we will have two jury panels available and both Branches 1 and 3 will be available to accommodate trials during that week. The specific masking requirements will depend on the judge conducting the trial in consultation with the parties. For now, the jurors will be asked to mask during selection in light of the larger numbers of folks in the courtroom.

Once again thank you for your cooperation and support during this long COVID journey we have all be on together. This is a time for transition, unfortunately, COVID-19 will be with us for the foreseeable future but thanks to medical science, and we can learn to live with it safely.

Sincerely,



Hon. Ramona A. Gonzalez
La Crosse County Presiding Judge
La Crosse County Circuit Court Judge – Branch 1