



Workers' Compensation Office of Adjudication
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External WCAIS Alert:

WCOA "Green" County Guidelines for In-Person Hearings and Mediations

The designation of counties as "green" does not automatically signal a return to in-person hearings. In-person hearings will be held only in limited circumstances. A WCJ may determine, on his own motion, that in-person testimony is necessary for assessment of witness credibility and schedule a hearing accordingly. Parties or their counsel can also make a request to present in-person testimony, however the WCJ will determine whether, in his discretion, in-person testimony is necessary. Parties making such a request should include a justification and the position of the opposing party on the request.

In person hearings may **only** be conducted in counties designated as "green" by the Governor. In those counties, WCOA employees will continue to perform duties primarily via telework. Events will be held virtually to the greatest extent possible. Where in-person testimony is deemed necessary, these guidelines must be adhered to.

Each individual who enters the office has a **personal responsibility to follow the CDC and DOH guidelines** for handwashing, social distancing, wearing masks, and staying home if sick. Parties must review and comply with the guidance issued below:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/index.html>
<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

Hearing Room and Lobby Logistics

- In-person events will be limited to one Judge in the office per day.
- Each event shall include no more than 10 persons, including the Judge.
- Lobby and hearing room chairs and counsel tables will be spaced 6 feet apart to promote social distancing.
- Hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes will be accessible to the Judge, parties, and any other attendees. Parties must limit attendees to only necessary persons.

Attendance at Hearings

- WCOA will schedule a 15 minute interval between events to allow for proper cleaning of work stations, hand-washing, etc. A WCOA authorized security vendor will wipe down counsel tables, chairs, witness bench and door handles prior-to and after every event.

- Parties must arrive promptly at the start time of the hearing.
- Upon arrival at the office, each individual must check in with the Security Guard.
- The security guard will ask each party the following:
 - “Are you showing any signs of one or more of the following symptoms - Temperature 100.4 °F or higher, cough, shortness of breath, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell or difficulty breathing?”
 - “Is the information you provided true and correct to the best of your knowledge?”

If the party acknowledges having symptoms, he/she will be directed to leave and the event will be rescheduled for a later date.

- The Security Guard will ensure each party is wearing a mask. **If the party refuses to wear a mask, he/she will not be permitted in the hearing room and will be directed to leave.**
- Parties will be immediately directed to the appropriate hearing room to limit gatherings in the lobby.
- Parties are responsible at all times to follow the CDC and DOH guidelines for handwashing, social distancing, wearing masks, and staying home if sick.
- When interpreters and court reporters are required to be on-site they must follow all safety standards with respect to masks and social distancing in this memorandum.