

Boston Municipal Court FAQs Related to COVID-19

Frequently asked questions about the Boston Municipal Court related to coronavirus (COVID-19).
Last updated July 15, 2020.

General FAQs

Q. Have the courts re-opened to the public for physical entry?

Yes, courts are open to the public on a limited basis beginning on July 13, 2020. Physical access to a courthouse is permitted for access to the Clerk's office and for certain in-person case events. All public access is subject to the orders regarding health and safety protocols established by the Supreme Judicial Court and Executive Office of the Trial Court, which include overall capacity limits for each courthouse, specific capacity limits for individual public spaces including courtrooms, Clerk's Offices, elevators and bathrooms to enable physical distancing; and a mandatory face covering requirement. These protocols may be found here: [Trial Court Emergency Administrative Order 20-11](#).

Q. Are any cases being heard in courtrooms?

Yes, beginning on July 13, 2020, some cases are proceeding in-person (i.e. in a courtroom) but most cases continue to be heard virtually (i.e., by telephone conference call or videoconference).

The case events that are being heard in-person occur in two phases. The first phase begins on July 13, 2020 and the second phase begins August 10, 2020. Matters that will be heard in-person in Phase One on July 13 are:

1. arraignments for cases where the defendant is in custody;
2. motions for pretrial detention pursuant to G.L. c. 276, §58A;
3. warrant removal hearings;
4. motions for return of bail;
5. probation detention hearings and stipulated final probation violation hearings;
6. plea and admission hearings; and

7. hearings on petitions pursuant to G.L. 123, § 35.

All other matters will be conducted virtually. It is anticipated that the list of in-person events will expand in Phase Two (starting August 10, 2020). A list of the anticipated events for Phase Two may be found here: [Boston Municipal Court Standing Order 8-20](#). This list is subject to change prior to August 10, 2020.

Q. Do I have to attend a hearing that is being held in-person?

A participant in a hearing (i.e., attorney, witness, party) may be permitted to attend virtually by a judge presiding over the hearing based on concerns related to COVID-19. You should contact your attorney, if you are represented, or you should contact the court division's Clerk's office. Email and telephone information is located on each of the Boston Municipal Court location pages ([Brighton](#), [Central](#), [Charlestown](#), [Dorchester](#), [East Boston](#), [Roxbury](#), [South Boston](#), [West Roxbury](#)). Click on the courthouse you are looking for to access the email address and main phone number.

Q. Am I required to wear a mask when entering courthouse?

Yes. The Supreme Judicial Court and Executive Office of the Trial Court have issued orders regarding health and safety protocols, including the requirement that all persons present in courthouses wear masks at all times. These protocols can be found here: [Trial Court Emergency Administrative Order 20-11](#).

Q. Are courthouse staff required to wear a mask?

Yes. The Supreme Judicial Court and Executive Office of the Trial Court have issued orders regarding health and safety protocols, including the requirement that all persons present in courthouses wear masks at all times, including courthouse staff. These protocols can be found here: [Trial Court Emergency Administrative Order 20-11](#).

Q. I don't see the next event in my case on the list of in-person matters. How do I attend my virtual hearing?

You should receive a notice in the mail with instructions on how to connect to your virtual hearing prior to the hearing date. If you have not received such a notice you should a) contact your

attorney, if you are represented, or b) contact the court division's Clerk's office. Email and telephone information is located on each of the Boston Municipal Court location pages ([Brighton](#), [Central](#), [Charlestown](#), [Dorchester](#), [East Boston](#), [Roxbury](#), [South Boston](#), [West Roxbury](#)). Click on the courthouse you are looking for to access the email address and main phone number.

Q. What do I do if my local courthouse is temporarily closed due to COVID 19?

It is still possible courthouses may close to the public based on COVID-19 exposure. You can find information regarding temporary court closures at: [Temporary court closures due to COVID-19](#). You can also call the [Trial Court Help Line](#) at 833-91COURT. Even if your local court is temporarily closed, there are procedures in place for Emergency Matters to be handled virtually.

Q. How can I file something in the Boston Municipal Court?

Clerk's offices are open to the public beginning July 13, 2020 but the public is still urged to continue to file all documents electronically to avoid foot traffic in courthouses. Clerk's offices will also have drop boxes at the courthouse to file documents in-person. You may also review [eFiling in the Boston Municipal Court Department](#) for information regarding eFiling.

Please contact the specific court to determine how best to file documents electronically. The best way to reach court staff is to email the Clerk's office but you may also call the main phone number to the courthouse. Email and telephone information is located on each of the Boston Municipal Court location contact pages ([Brighton](#), [Central](#), [Charlestown](#), [Dorchester](#), [East Boston](#), [Roxbury](#), [South Boston](#), [West Roxbury](#)). Click on the courthouse you are looking for to access the email address and main phone number.

Please keep in mind that although the courthouses and Clerk's offices are open, the courts may still be operating with reduced staff on-site based on capacity limits established to permit physical distancing.

Q. Can I speak to someone in person at a specific Clerk's office?

The best way to communicate directly with a specific Clerk's office for information about a case is to call the main number or email them using the contact information listed on each of the Boston Municipal Court location pages ([Brighton](#), [Central](#), [Charlestown](#), [Dorchester](#), [East](#)

[Boston](#), [Roxbury](#), [South Boston](#), [West Roxbury](#)). Click on the courthouse you are looking for to access the email address and main phone number.

Please keep in mind that courts may be operating with reduced staff due to courthouse occupancy limits.

Q: I had a hearing using a conference call line. Can I use this number to contact the Clerk's office directly?

No. The conference call lines are for court hearings only. The best way to reach court staff is by the general email address located on each of the listed on each of the Boston Municipal Court location pages ([Brighton](#), [Central](#), [Charlestown](#), [Dorchester](#), [East Boston](#), [Roxbury](#), [South Boston](#), [West Roxbury](#)). Click on the courthouse you are looking for to access the email address and main phone number.

Q. Can I access my case online?

The following civil case types can be accessed and viewed via [MassCourts](#).

- Civil
- Small Claims
- Summary Process
- Supplementary Process

Q. What should I do if I was scheduled for Jury Duty?

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ordered that all jury trials, in both criminal and civil cases, are postponed until September 8, 2020. If you were scheduled for jury duty before Monday, September 4, your jury duty has been cancelled. You won't be summoned again until 2021, at the earliest.

If you're scheduled to appear for jury duty on September 8, 2020 or later, you are on Standby, meaning you may or may not have to serve. You'll receive more information from the Office of Jury Commissioner about your service as your date gets closer.

Q. My case is supposed to go to trial – will I be able to have a jury trial?

By order of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, all jury trials have been continued to a date on or after September 8, 2020.

If the parties and the court agree that the case can be decided by a bench trial (a case where the judge serves as the fact-finder instead of a jury) without the need for in-person appearance in court, it is possible that your trial may proceed. If you have questions about your trial, you should a) contact your attorney, if you have an attorney, to discuss the status of your case or b) contact the court division's Clerk's office. Email and telephone information is located on each of the Boston Municipal Court location pages ([Brighton](#), [Central](#), [Charlestown](#), [Dorchester](#), [East Boston](#), [Roxbury](#), [South Boston](#), [West Roxbury](#)), click on the courthouse you are looking for to access the email address and main phone number.

Q. I tried to email the Clerk's office, but no one responded. How can I make sure my email is being received by the Clerk's office?

The courts may be operating with reduced staff due to the coronavirus and occupancy limits established to allow for physical distancing. A general email account for each Clerk's office has been established. If you do not receive a response, you may also contact the Clerk's office by telephone. Telephone information is located on each of the Boston Municipal Court location pages ([Brighton](#), [Central](#), [Charlestown](#), [Dorchester](#), [East Boston](#), [Roxbury](#), [South Boston](#), [West Roxbury](#)). Click on the courthouse you are looking for to access the main phone number.

Q. Am I allowed to bring my cell phone into a courthouse?

The Executive Office of the Trial Court has issued an Order temporarily suspending all courthouse cell phone bans that can be found here: [Trial Court Emergency Administrative Order 20-10](#). Recording and photographing inside a courthouse by non-media members without the express permission of certain court personnel is strictly prohibited.

Civil FAQ

Q. Can I come to court to get a restraining order?

All protection order hearings are still proceeding virtually unless ordered by a judge to proceed in-person. You should call the Clerk's Office to initiate the process. You may also file an Application for a protection order in-person in the Clerk's Office. You may access the Application and other documents required for a protection order here: [COVID-19 Resources for Abuse Protection Orders and Harassment Prevention Orders](#).

If you need help or support or have questions about abuse, you can also contact [SafeLink](#), the Massachusetts statewide toll-free domestic violence hotline. The SafeLink toll-free number is **(877) 785-2020**. If you are hearing-impaired, please call the SafeLink TTY number at **(877) 521-2601**.

Q. I have a restraining order and it is about to expire. What do I do?

All emergency protection order (G.L. c. 209A; G.L. c. 258E; G.L. c. 140) hearings are proceeding virtually unless a judge orders an in-person hearing. You will receive notice of any future court hearing dates that you **must** attend if you want a restraining order to last longer.

If you need help or support or have questions about abuse, you can also contact [SafeLink](#), the Massachusetts statewide toll-free domestic violence hotline. The SafeLink toll-free number is **(877) 785-2020**. If you are hearing-impaired, please call the SafeLink TTY number at **(877) 521-2601**.

Q. I have been notified I have a hearing date. Will it be held?

If you have been notified of a court date your hearing should proceed. To make sure your case is still scheduled, you should a) contact your attorney, if you are represented by an attorney, or b) contact the court division's Clerk's office. Email and telephone information is located on each of the Boston Municipal Court location pages ([Brighton](#), [Central](#), [Charlestown](#), [Dorchester](#), [East Boston](#), [Roxbury](#), [South Boston](#), [West Roxbury](#)). Click on the courthouse you are looking for to access the email address and main phone number.

Some hearings are being held in-person while other hearings are being conducted virtually (telephone or videoconference). The notice you received about your court date from the court should have instructions on how to access your virtual hearing.

Q. Do I come to the courthouse for a hearing on my traffic ticket?

No. Civil motor vehicle infraction hearings are not being held in-person at this time. If you have been notified of a traffic citation hearing, this hearing will proceed virtually by telephone or videoconference. The notice you received about your court date from the court should have instructions on how to access your virtual hearing. If you did not receive this information, you should a) contact your attorney, if you are represented, or b) contact the court division's Clerk's office. Email and telephone information is located on each of the Boston Municipal Court location pages ([Brighton](#), [Central](#), [Charlestown](#), [Dorchester](#), [East Boston](#), [Roxbury](#), [South Boston](#), [West Roxbury](#)), click on the courthouse you are looking for to access the email address and main phone number.

Q. Are substance use commitment hearings taking place in the courthouse?

Yes. Hearings on requests for warrants of apprehension and commitment hearings pursuant to G.L. c. 123, § 35 are proceeding in-person starting July 13, 2020.

Criminal FAQs

Q. If someone is arrested, will they be brought to the courthouse?

Any person arrested that cannot make the bail set by a bail magistrate will be brought to the courthouse for their arraignment either the same day if time permits, or the next business day. Any person that posts bail set by the bail magistrate will have an arraignment date scheduled within 30 days of their arrest.

Q. I have been notified I have a hearing date. Will it be held?

If you have been notified of a court date your hearing should proceed. To make sure your case is still scheduled, you should a) contact your attorney, if you are represented by an attorney, or b) contact the court division's Clerk's office. Email and telephone information is located on each of the Boston Municipal Court location pages ([Brighton](#), [Central](#), [Charlestown](#), [Dorchester](#), [East Boston](#), [Roxbury](#), [South Boston](#), [West Roxbury](#)). Click on the courthouse you are looking for to access the email address and main phone number.

Some hearings are being held in-person while other hearings are being conducted virtually (telephone or videoconference). The notice you received about your court date from the court should have instructions on how to access your virtual hearing.

Q. My case is over. Can I get my bail returned?

Beginning on July 13, 2020 Clerk's offices are open to the public, including to process bail returns, subject to occupancy limits. Parties should contact the Clerk's office to avoid long wait times due to courthouse occupancy limits and to reduce foot traffic in the courthouse. Email and telephone information is located on each of the Boston Municipal Court location pages ([Brighton](#), [Central](#), [Charlestown](#), [Dorchester](#), [East Boston](#), [Roxbury](#), [South Boston](#), [West Roxbury](#)). Click on the courthouse you are looking for to access the email address and main phone number.

Q. I have a warrant, can I come to court to remove the warrant?

Beginning on July 13, 2020 warrant removal hearings will take place in-person at courthouses. Please keep in mind, if you had a payment due after March 13, those payments dates have been extended until July 15.

Q: Can I have my criminal record expunged?

Expungement Petitions pursuant to G.L. c. 276, § 100K may be filed at the courthouse. Any expungement hearing will proceed virtually. If a matter on your criminal record is interfering with your housing or employment situation, please call the Clerk's office where the matter occurred to seek further information. You can reach the Clerk's office by using the general email address or main phone number. Email and telephone information is located on each of the Boston Municipal Court location pages ([Brighton](#), [Central](#), [Charlestown](#), [Dorchester](#), [East Boston](#), [Roxbury](#), [South Boston](#), [West Roxbury](#)). Click on the courthouse you are looking for to access the email address and main phone number.

Q. My case is supposed to go to trial, will I be able to have a jury trial?

By order of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, all jury trials have been continued to a date after September 4, 2020. You should speak with your lawyer about the status of the case.

Q. I am on Probation and I need to leave the state due to a family emergency. Can I have my probation conditions changed?

You should contact your probation officer. The Court may be able to handle this matter administratively without a hearing **if** the District Attorney and probation do not have an objection. If there is an objection, a video or telephone conference will be arranged. Probation offices can be reached by calling the main phone number for the court. Email and telephone information is located on each of the Boston Municipal Court location pages ([Brighton](#), [Central](#), [Charlestown](#), [Dorchester](#), [East Boston](#), [Roxbury](#), [South Boston](#), [West Roxbury](#)). Click on the courthouse you are looking for to access the email address and main phone number.

Q. Can I make payments in person at the courthouse?

Fees or fines can be paid at a courthouse at this time but you are encouraged to make a payment online using the ePay System, by visiting [ePay in the Courts](#) Any payment due date since March 13 has been extended to July 15, 2020 in all cases.