

Massachusetts courthouses reopening for limited business on July 13

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Courthouses in Massachusetts will reopen to the public on July 13 for limited purposes, with the courts continuing to conduct most business virtually.

Under an updated order issued Wednesday by the Supreme Judicial Court, entry will be limited to people attending in-person proceedings, conducting business with a clerk's, register's or recorder's office, people meeting with probation, and people conducting business at other open offices in the courthouses. The SJC said that people seeking to enter courthouses "will be screened to prevent the spread of COVID-19."

The SJC plans additional reopening phases, with the number of in-person proceedings expanding during a second phase beginning on Aug. 10. In advance of each phase, Trial Court departments will identify new matters they will be addressing in person on the court system's COVID-19 webpage, according to the SJC.

"Jury trials in both criminal and civil cases in state courts continue to be postponed to a date no earlier than September 8, 2020," the SJC said. "Starting July 13, judges may begin to schedule civil and criminal bench trials. No new grand jury can be empaneled prior to September 8, unless the Supreme Judicial Court so orders. Existing grand juries are extended until the date of that new empanelment or the date of the October 2020 empanelment in the relevant judicial district, whichever occurs first."