

# Miami-Dade Courts Quickly Backtrack on Easing COVID-19 Rules

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## News

Conditions for court appearances called for "limited in-person contact," but those were withdrawn in favor of making even that "inadvisable."

By **Catherine Wilson** | June 25, 2020 at 04:32 PM



Hand sanitizer dispenser at Miami-Dade County Courthouse, 73 W. Flagler St., Miami. Courtesy photo

Miami-Dade Circuit Court backtracked Thursday on COVID-19 restrictions loosened only three days before as daily coronavirus case counts hit new records in Florida.

The temporary break had little effect because courthouses under the Phase 1 and Phase 2 rules remained closed to in-person appearances with few exceptions.

Under the most restrictive Phase 1 standard set by Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice Charles Canady, remote hearings were encouraged but courts were effectively closed to the public and in-person appearances were considered “inadvisable” and “rare.”

Under the looser Phase 2 rules, “limited in-person contact is authorized for certain purposes and/or requires use of protective measures” based on a June 16 administrative order issued by Canady.

Safety precautions for court visitors under an order issued Monday by Miami-Dade Chief Judge Bertila Soto required face masks, social distancing, temperature checks and health screening questions at entrances.

Unfortunately, Florida COVID-19 cases boomed since then, including two days with over 5,000 new cases for the first time. Miami-Dade accounts for 25% of the state’s cases, and South Florida has 46% of the Florida tally.

Palm Beach County issued an order requiring masks to be worn in public places starting Thursday.

As current court restrictions stand, any large-scale reopening of state courts is off until late July, and South Florida federal trials have been delayed until at least Aug. 31.

## Catherine Wilson

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Catherine Wilson is managing editor of the Daily Business Review. Contact her at [cwilson@alm.com](mailto:cwilson@alm.com). On Twitter at [@cmwalm](https://twitter.com/cmwalm)

