



QUEENS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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Dear Friends,

Due to an abundance of concern about public health and safety, District Attorney Melinda Katz urges everyone to do their part to combat the transmission of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Queens County.

Be safe. Take common sense precautions like frequently washing your hands with soap and water. Avoid unnecessary gatherings and practice social distancing. Stay home. Call your medical provider for guidance if you have symptoms like coughing, shortness of breath, fever, or sore throat. If you need help finding medical care, call 311.

Below is a detailed statement describing the actions DA Katz has taken to ensure the safety of the Queens County District Attorney's Office, followed by important contact information.

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz today assured those in Queens County that the District Attorney's Office will be taking immediate action to protect the hundreds of employees that work within the DA's Office and to keep all defendants, crime victims, witnesses, jurors and all others we interact with safe from the COVID-19 virus that has gripped our City and the entire country.

District Attorney Katz said, "As New Yorkers, we have lived through citywide crises before. We survived the attacks of September 11th and the ravages of Superstorm Sandy. We have always found a way to come together, to support one another and protect the vulnerable. I have no doubt that we will get through this new crisis, but it will take all of us doing our jobs and taking the extra steps to work in unison to fight this potentially deadly virus. Ultimately, however, this office will continue to function and work with our criminal justice system to assure that the rights of both defendants and victims are safeguarded."

Continuing the DA said, "For those of us in positions of leadership within our government, we must find new, creative and effective ways to continue to serve the public while at the same time minimizing the risk of spreading the coronavirus. The responsibilities of my office are essential to the continuing function of public safety and may be even more so as this crisis evolves."

The District Attorney's Office will continue to staff every essential aspect of our work and are prepared to respond and adapt to each challenge.

DA Katz said, “The headlines are frightening, but we know that there are numerous things we can do to combat this growing epidemic. My first priority is to make sure we continue to provide a fair criminal justice system. We are mandating changes that will help to keep everyone safe while at the same time ensuring the rights of defendants. We will do so while we take steps to enable social distancing, tele-working and other procedures.”

Many of these changes were initiated by Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence Marks, who acted with great leadership to make meaningful changes to keep defendants safe while preserving their rights as they continue through the criminal justice system.

The District Attorney announced these changes:

- We are cooperating with the Courts and defense bar to facilitate arraignments which will take place via video conferencing. Defendants will appear on video screens from within the confines of Central Booking, if they are healthy. If a defendant is sick, he or she will be taken to the Red Hook Community Court and be arraigned via video conferencing from that location. Defendants will still have an opportunity to meet with their defense attorneys – via video conferencing. The arraignments via video will begin immediately.
- We will be prioritizing in defendants’ cases and delaying their next court appearances. If a defendant is currently being held, the next court date will be scheduled for at least 30 days from now. For defendants who are not being held, their court dates will be scheduled for 90 days from now.
- The Office will continue to determine on a case by case basis whether to decline to prosecute low level offenses, as we have been doing since January 1st.
- We will ensure that all essential functions are maintained. To that end, our staff is prepared to accept modified assignments.
- Internally, members of the District Attorney’s staff that are able to perform their jobs from home will work remotely, thereby avoiding as much interaction as possible with others. This is especially true for any of our workers who may have a heart condition, diabetes, are pregnant or have other underlying medical issues. Assistant District Attorneys will telework whenever possible. Internal meetings with members of the DA’s staff will take place via videoconferencing.
- Cleaning and sanitizing the District Attorney’s Offices and the courthouse, too, will be accelerated and enhanced.

The District Attorney’s Office will continue, as usual, but with various changes to keep our employees, defendants, victims, defense attorneys and everyone involved with the criminal justice system safe in this uncertain time.

District Attorney Katz would like to thank Chief Judge Janet DiFiore along with Chief Administrative Judge Marks for their remarkable leadership during this crisis, as well as Judge Joseph Zayas and Judge Michelle Johnson.

Important Contact Information

Main Telephone Number
718.286.6000

Communications
718.286.6315

Case Information
718.286.6000

Consumer Fraud
718.286.6673

24-hour Hotline
718.286.6580

Elder Fraud
718.286.6578

Intergovernmental Affairs & Policy
718.286.5966

Crime Victims Advocate Program
718.286.6812

Community Partnerships
718.286.6400

Immigration Hotline
718.286.6690

Conviction Integrity Unit
CIU@queensda.org

General Information
Info@queensda.org

DA's Office Career Opportunities
Career@queensda.org