

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR WORCESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

COURTHOUSE POLICY ON FIREARMS, WEAPONS, AND CONTRABAND

WHEREAS, To preserve order, promote the effective administration of justice, and ensure the safety of all persons working in or conducting business in the Circuit Court for Worcester County, it is necessary to adopt and publish a written policy governing the carrying of firearms and other weapons into any area housing Circuit Court functions; and

WHEREAS, A copy of the policy, as promulgated in this Administrative Order, shall be filed with the Clerk of Court for Worcester County.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is, this 28th day of February, 2018, by the Circuit Court for Worcester County, Maryland, ORDERED:

1. Purpose

To provide a safe and secured environment to work and conduct official business in and around the Worcester County Circuit Court building located at One West Market Street, Snow Hill, Maryland, the following policy will be implemented and enforced by the Sheriff or the Sheriff's designee.

2. Definitions

- a. In this Policy, the following words have the meanings stated.
- b. "Contraband" means any items or substances, the possession of which is illegal, including, but not limited to, controlled dangerous substances and drug paraphernalia.
- c. "Courthouse" means the County Court Building located at One West Market Street in Snow Hill, Maryland and includes the Courthouse grounds and curtilage.

- d. "Court Security" means the sworn law enforcement officers and civilian personnel assigned by the Sheriff of Worcester County to provide Courthouse security services.
- e. "Court Staff" means only those persons employed by this Court, the Register of Wills and staff, and those persons employed by the Clerk of the Circuit Court for Worcester County.
- f. "Weapons" include, but are not limited to, firearms, knives, metal knuckles, clubs, nunchaku, razors, chemical mace, pepper spray and any other dangerous item or instrumentality that Court Security considers capable of being used as a weapon.

3. Compliance

- a. The Sheriff for Worcester County is responsible for Courthouse security. Accordingly, all persons shall comply with this Order, as enforced by Court Security, and with the Sheriff's instructions regarding security measures in and around Courthouse facilities.
- b. Any person(s) who fails to comply with this Order, or the Sheriff's instructions, is subject to referral, by Court Security, to this Court for appropriate sanctions.

4. Security Screening

- a. All persons entering the Courthouse shall submit to security screening for the purpose of detecting weapons and contraband. Such searches may include the use of electronic or other specialized equipment or manual searches, as deemed appropriate by Court Security. In addition, all briefcases, packages, bags, purses, wallets, cell phones, electronic devices and other personal belongings will be scanned by an x-ray machine and may be manually inspected, except that the person and belongings of the following individuals are exempt from security screening unless, in the opinion of Court Security, there is a particularized security concern that warrants screening:
 - i. Active and retired Judges;
 - ii. Court staff;
 - iii. Sworn law enforcement officers attending court on official business;
 - iv. Correctional officers attending court on official business;

- v. State's Attorney's Office personnel attending court on official business;
 - 1. Orphans' Court judges; the Register of Wills and the Register's staff, and any other State or County employee whose office is located in the Courthouse; and
 - 2. Any person made exempt by Order of the County Administrative Judge.
- b. Notwithstanding the foregoing exemptions, Court Security reserves the right to require any person to go through security screening as a random security check.

5. Firearms and Other Weapons

- a. Law enforcement officers assigned to Courthouse security duties may possess firearms and other weapons in or on Courthouse premises, in accordance with Worcester County Sheriff's Office policy.
- b. Federal, State or local law enforcement officers, whether uniformed or non-uniformed, entering the Courthouse, may retain their firearms and/or other weapons assigned to them by their employing agencies only after presenting agency identification to Court Security and arranging to overtly wear a badge and agency-issued identification by which Court Security and other law enforcement agencies can recognize them as armed law enforcement officers. Plain clothes officers must have their weapon concealed at all times and overtly wear badge/identification as set forth above.
- c. Whether or not in uniform, and whether or not identified to Court Security, a law enforcement officer may not possess a firearm or other weapon in or on Courthouse premises when that officer is:
 - i. A party to any litigation in a personal or non-official capacity;
 - ii. A witness in a matter unrelated to law enforcement duties, or
 - iii. A juror.
- d. Any law enforcement officer who does not meet the foregoing criteria for possessing a weapon in the Courthouse, and any other person(s) with a current permit to carry a weapon, shall surrender their weapons to Court Security for safekeeping while in the Courthouse.

- e. No weapons will be allowed in the prisoner holding areas and elevators except for immediate storage in a secured gun locker. The process of storing the weapon will occur outside the presence and vicinity of any prisoner.

6. Evidence

- a. The following Evidence Procedures shall be applied when a firearm or ammunition is to be introduced in Court:
 - i. The Sheriff's Office is first notified upon entering the Circuit Courthouse, AND
 - ii. Weapons have been rendered safe. This will be done by:
 - 1. Running a "plastic handcuff (flex cuffs)", or other locking device through the chamber so it is impossible for the cylinder or slide to close, or
 - 2. Attaching a gun lock to the trigger.
 - iii. Ammunition to be brought into the Courthouse as evidence must be contained in a separate bag or package.
 - iv. Firearms should be in an approved gun evidence container or similar packaging that conceals the weapon. If the weapon container is sealed with evidence tape, it should be safety checked when so ordered by the Judge.
 - v. Other weapons must be secured in appropriate packaging to prevent access use or visibility to the public.

7. Contraband. No contraband of any kind is permitted within the Courthouse, unless it is in the possession of a law enforcement officer or an agent of the State's Attorney's Office for use as evidence in a case and is properly secured.

8. Waiver. The provisions of this Order may be waived, on a case-by-case basis, by the County Administrative Judge, acting in his or her sole discretion, upon a showing of a particularized need, but any such waiver shall not provide a basis or precedent for future waiver requests.

9. Effective Date. This Order shall take effect on March 1, 2018 and shall supersede all prior Orders governing any matters which are the subject of this Order. Accordingly, those Orders are hereby rescinded.

Brian D. Shockley
County Administrative Judge
Circuit Court for Worcester County

Sheriff Reggie Mason
Worcester County Sheriff