



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
TWENTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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**District Attorney's Office
Announces Justice Response to COVID-19**

(Boulder, Colorado) – The District Attorney's Office is committed to enhancing public safety, seeking justice in every case, and meeting the needs of our entire community. Since this worldwide crisis developed, the District Attorney's Office has actively engaged in proactive steps to protect the safety and welfare of the community. District Attorney Michael Dougherty has focused the efforts in three specific, priority areas:

Enhance Public Safety: The Governor ordered that bars, restaurants, gyms, casinos, and theatres be closed. Many people are working from home. However, law enforcement and other first responders remain fully engaged in protecting our community. The District Attorney's Office appreciates their efforts, stands united with them in this mission, and continues to maintain staff available 24/7 to assist with cases. Whether it be large groups of CU students failing to comply with the Governor's Order or the commission of a violent felony, the District Attorney's Office is continuing to partner with outstanding women and men in law enforcement.

Protect Victims: COVID-19 is putting an incredible strain on crime victims who are already struggling with difficult situations, especially victims of domestic violence, unlawful sexual behavior, and violent felonies. Our office remains open and is in close communication with victims. Essential staff is available to assist any victim in navigating this difficult period. We strongly encourage victims to contact law enforcement or the District Attorney's Office with any questions. This office has a proven track record of fighting for victims; that is more important now than ever. Additionally, earlier today, the District Attorney's Office issued a fraud alert for scams related to the coronavirus.

Reduce the Jail Population While Maintaining Public Safety: On average, there are 450 people in Boulder County Jail on any given day. These individuals are often in the jail for short periods of time, with people cycling in and out, entering and exiting the jail every day. It is only a matter of time before this highly contagious virus hits the jail population, the Sheriff's staff, medical staff, and visitors to the jail. At a time when people should gather only in very small groups, the population of the jail will easily become a breeding ground for the spread of the virus. Upon completing their sentence, offenders with the coronavirus would still be released to the community.

In collaboration with law enforcement, Sheriff Joe Pelle, the Courts, and the Public Defender's Office, the following proactive steps have been taken to limit the spread and risk to the jail population, as well as the subsequent exposure to the community:

- Law enforcement is issuing summonses whenever appropriate, in lieu of booking offenders into the jail, particularly on low-level, non-violent offenses.
- The DA's Office reviewed all offenders with pre-existing medical conditions and compromised immune systems rendering them in the high-risk category. The District Attorney's Office recommended the release of individuals from this list who do not demonstrate a significant risk to the community.
- The DA's Office analyzed the cases of any offender with fewer than 45 days left on their sentence, particularly lower risk, non-violent offenders, recommending a slightly earlier release for these offenders rather than wait until after the virus hits the jail population.
- DA staff reviewed offenders in custody, as well as categories of future offenses, for personal recognizance bonds. The prosecution of these cases will continue, but the offender will be monitored in the community. Again, the focus has been reducing the jail population without jeopardizing public safety.
- Boulder County Pre-trial Services and the Probation Department are engaged in working with eligible offenders to monitor and support their release.

Working with Courts to Reduce Community Exposure at the Courthouses: Governor Polis ordered that all bars, restaurants, gyms, casinos, and theatres be closed for 30 days. Additionally, the Governor announced all Department of Motor Vehicle offices will be closed until April 18th. However, on March 16th, the Colorado Supreme Court issued an Order stating that jury trials should continue to be held, unless a local jurisdiction determines otherwise. The Supreme Court Chief Justice Order requires hundreds of community members to report and gather for jury service, at the same time they cannot visit restaurants, gyms, or the DMV. It risks coronavirus for any criminal case juror answering their call to perform their civic duty. Rather than require hundreds of our community members to appear for jury service, the District Attorney fully supported Boulder District Court Chief Judge Ingrid Bakke's Order to suspend all jury trials in Boulder County until after May 1st.

District Attorney Michael Dougherty stated, "Through our collaborative and strong partnerships, we have been proactive in taking steps to protect the community and victims, while moving to limit the inevitable spread of the virus. We carefully balance public safety, protecting victims, and the constitutional rights of defendants. We are far ahead of other jurisdictions. For example, an outbreak of the coronavirus in jail will happen quickly and impact not simply those behind bars, but our entire Boulder community. It will have a significant and possibly catastrophic impact on offenders, jail staff, their families, and the wider community. By taking these proactive steps, we can both reduce the spread of infection and better protect our community. In terms of jury service, I was surprised that the Colorado Supreme Court suggested that jury service should continue unabated when, at the same time, the Governor is ordering people not to gather. I am fully committed to our making decisions that better protect our community members, especially our most vulnerable, in Boulder County."