

**IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF NORTHAMPTON COUNTY  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
CRIMINAL DIVISION - LAW**

**IN RE: ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER  
2021-19**

**No.: C-48-AD-211-2021**

**ESTABLISHMENT OF A CENTRAL COURT**

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NORTHAMPTON COUNTY PA

**AMENDED ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER**

**AND NOW**, this 15<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2021, pursuant to Pennsylvania Rule of Judicial Administration 605(A)(5) and Pennsylvania Rule of Criminal Procedure 131(B), in order to serve the public's compelling interest in conducting judicial proceedings in the most efficient, secure, and cost-effective manner, the President Judge of the Third Judicial District has determined that local conditions require establishment of a central location for conducting preliminary hearings in criminal cases. Accordingly, it is hereby **ORDERED** as follows:

1. In criminal cases originating in Magisterial District Courts of the Third Judicial District, preliminary hearings for incarcerated defendants shall be held in the Northampton County Courthouse, Courtroom 4, 669 Washington Street, Easton, Pennsylvania 18042. The courtroom where such preliminary hearings are conducted shall be known as "Central Court."

2. The operations of Central Court shall be administered by the Court Administrator of the Northampton County Court of Common Pleas and

employees in the Office of Court Administration ("Central Court Staff").

The Court Administrator and Central Court Staff shall be responsible for all administrative functions of Central Court, including, but not limited to, creating the rotation schedule for Magisterial District Judges, assigning and supervising courtroom personnel and support staff, creating the calendar for scheduling of preliminary hearings, processing requests for continuances, providing court files to the designated Magisterial District Judge sitting in Central Court, setting protocols governing security and public health issues, and coordinating with Magisterial District Courts, the Northampton County Sheriff's Department, the Criminal Division of the Northampton County Court of Common Pleas, the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's office, police departments, private counsel, litigants, and witnesses. Central Court may be contacted by calling 610-829-6919 or by sending an email to [centralcourt@northamptoncounty.org](mailto:centralcourt@northamptoncounty.org).

3. On each day that Central Court is in session, one Magisterial District Judge shall be temporarily reassigned from his or her own Magisterial District Court to Central Court and shall preside over all proceedings conducted in Central Court that day. Magisterial District Judges shall be assigned to Central Court on a rotating basis, with the duty of serving in Central Court apportioned equally among all Magisterial District Judges. The rotation schedule shall be created by the Court Administrator. If a Magisterial District Judge will be unable to assume his or her Central

Court assignment for a particular date, the assigned Magisterial District Judge shall be responsible for securing another Magisterial District Judge to assume the assignment for that date and shall notify Central Court of the change as soon as is reasonably practicable.

4. Central Court shall be in session every week from Monday through Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. and between 1:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. Preliminary hearings shall be scheduled at one hour intervals throughout the day, or at longer intervals as circumstances may require.

5. Preliminary hearings shall be scheduled in the first instance during the preliminary arraignment process upon issuance of a summons by the originating Magisterial District Court through the Magisterial District Judge System ("MDJS"). At the conclusion of the preliminary arraignment, the Magisterial District Judge shall issue a written notice (1) identifying the date, time, and place of the preliminary hearing in accordance with the requirements of this order and Pennsylvania Rule of Criminal Procedure 540; (2) indicating whether the defendant will require a foreign-language interpreter for the preliminary hearing, and, if so, the language for which the interpreter will be needed; (3) stating that, if the preliminary hearing is scheduled to take place at Central Court, the location of the hearing will not change regardless of whether the defendant remains incarcerated at the time of the preliminary hearing or is released from incarceration prior to the date of the preliminary hearing; and (4) providing that if an incarcerated

defendant is released from incarceration prior to the date of the preliminary hearing, the defendant shall notify Central Court within twenty-four hours of his or her release by calling 610-829-6919 or by sending an email to [centralcourt@northamptoncounty.org](mailto:centralcourt@northamptoncounty.org).

6. The staff of the originating Magisterial District Court shall require that the written notice referenced in paragraph 5 above and the following documents (as and where applicable) be entered into the MDJS and scanned into the Electronic Records Management System ("ERMS"): criminal complaint, affidavit of probable cause, confidential information form, bail bond, executed and returned arrest warrant, executed and returned search warrants, and any and all other documents created or referenced at the preliminary arraignment. The ERMS shall be accessible to the originating Magisterial District Court and Central Court Staff.

7. As soon as is reasonably practicable, Central Court Staff shall provide copies of the documents scanned into the ERMS and the schedule of upcoming preliminary hearings to (1) the Criminal Division of the Northampton County Court of Common Pleas; (2) the Northampton County District Attorney's Office; (3) the Northampton County Public Defender's Office; and (4) defense attorneys.

8. The schedule of each week's preliminary hearings to be held at Central Court shall be posted on the Northampton County Court of Common Pleas website at "[www.nccpa.org](http://www.nccpa.org)" and in the hallway outside Central Court.

9. Following each proceeding in Central Court, Central Court staff shall scan any and all documents generated at the proceeding into the ERMS. When all Central Court proceedings in an individual case have been concluded, Central Court Staff shall deliver the original case documents to the Criminal Division of the Court of Common Pleas. Any documents required to be provided to the Office of the District Attorney or the Public Defender's Office shall be transmitted to those Offices by Central Court Staff.

10. The Court Administrator shall take all steps necessary to implement the provisions of this Order.

11. This Order shall become effective on January 3, 2022 and the first preliminary hearing of an incarcerated defendant shall take place on January 13, 2022, at the Northampton County Courthouse.

**BY THE COURT:**

  
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**MICHAEL J. KOURY, JR.**  
**PRESIDENT JUDGE**