

**FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA  
ADMINISTRATIVE GOVERNING BOARD**

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**No. 16 of 2024**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER**

***In re: Directives to the Sheriff of Philadelphia Regarding Security of Court Facilities of the  
First Judicial District***

**ORDER**

**AND NOW**, this 9th day of December 2024, the Administrative Governing Board of the First Judicial District of Philadelphia County hereby issues the following Administrative Order containing directives to the Sheriff of Philadelphia regarding security of Court facilities of the First Judicial District:

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to Article V, section 10 of the Pennsylvania Constitution (entitled, “Judicial Administration”), the Pennsylvania Supreme Court is vested with broad and exclusive general supervisory and administrative authority over all the Courts in the Unified Judicial System; and pursuant to Article V, section 10(c) of the Pennsylvania Constitution, the Supreme Court has the power, *inter alia*, “to prescribe general rules governing...the conduct of all courts...and all officers serving process or enforcing orders...and the administration of all courts...;”

**WHEREAS**, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court established the Administrative Governing Board of the First Judicial District, by its Order of May 26th, 1993, and vested it with various duties and responsibilities, *inter alia*, monitoring the overall performance of the courts of the First Judicial District;

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to section 103 of Title 42 (entitled, “Judiciary and Judicial Procedure”), the Pennsylvania General Assembly recognized this Constitutional grant of authority by vesting in “the unified judicial system and in the personnel of the system power to do all things that are reasonably necessary for the proper execution and administration of their functions within the scope of their respective jurisdiction;”

**WHEREAS**, the Pennsylvania Rules of Judicial Administration define “sheriffs” as being “System and related personnel” and “Related staff” “who serve the unified judicial system;”

**WHEREAS**, the Pennsylvania General Assembly also recognizes, in the Judicial Code, that sheriffs are “System and related personnel” and “Related staff” who “serve the unified judicial system,” as confirmed by the General Assembly’s adoption of analogous definitions for these same terms;

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the foregoing provisions, this Court has authority over the Sheriff of Philadelphia in matters concerning the administration of the First Judicial District and with respect

to the services that the Sheriff performs for the Courts, including but not limited to, security in all court facilities and courtrooms, and prisoner transport.

**WHEREAS**, the proper administration of justice in the Courts of the First Judicial District has been – and will continue to be – threatened due to the Philadelphia Sheriff Office’s systemic failures to properly staff courtrooms and court facilities in the First Judicial District with AOPC tracking 72 security incidents in Philadelphia courts in 2023, which is a 140% increase in incidents between 2022 and 2023, with 2024 on pace to exceed the number of security incidents in 2023, and such security failures are an imminent threat to the safety and health of all persons present in the courthouses, courtrooms and court facilities, including members of the public, parties, victims, witnesses, attorneys, jurors, court staff and judges;

**WHEREAS**, the Sheriff of Philadelphia has failed in her responsibility to timely transport incarcerated persons between the holding rooms and courtrooms in the Stout Center for Criminal Justice, resulting in significant negative consequences including delays in or continuances of criminal proceedings, the failure of witnesses and victims to return to the Stout Center for a criminal proceeding that was continued or delayed, and costs and burdens imposed upon lawyers, jurors, and witnesses who appear for criminal proceedings that are delayed for hours;

**WHEREAS**, the Administrative Governing Board has attempted to resolve these failures through numerous informal and formal meetings, discussions and communications between the leadership of the Sheriff’s Office as well as directly with the Sheriff, and Judicial Leadership with the goal of addressing and resolving these failures, to no avail, which has threatened – and will continue to threaten – the proper functioning and safe operation and administration of the Courts in the First Judicial District;

**WHEREAS**, there is good cause shown and also exigent circumstances present for the Administrative Governing Board to enter this Administrative Order to direct the Sheriff of Philadelphia to submit a formal plan for staffing each courtroom with Sheriff’s deputies, for timely transportation of incarcerated persons to courthouses and court facilities, and to comply with other directives listed below; and

**NOW, THEREFORE**, it is hereby **ORDERED and DECREED** that, within 30 days of the date of this Order, the Sheriff of Philadelphia shall prepare and deliver to the District Court Administrator a detailed and complete written plan of action to accomplish all of the following directives within 90 days of the date of this Order:

1. Plans for staffing the entrances to the Stout Center for Criminal Justice, the Family Court Building, the 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> floors of the Widener Building, Traffic Court Building, and 714 Market Street.
2. Plans for deputy sheriffs to provide security patrols throughout the Stout Center, Family Court, City Hall and the Traffic Court Building throughout business hours (8 am – 5 pm.)

3. Plans and procedures to timely and safely transport prisoners to and from the courthouse and escort them throughout the building to and from holding areas to conference rooms and courtrooms ensuring arrival prior to the start of their scheduled hearings, trials or other court proceedings.
4. Plans and procedures to place a Deputy Sheriff in the following areas:
  - a. Each courtroom in the Stout Center for Criminal Justice when the courtroom is in operation.
  - b. Each courtroom in the Family Court Building when the courtroom is in operation.
  - c. Each floor of City Hall from the 2nd Floor to 6th Floor.
  - d. The 6th Floor and 10th Floors of the Widener Building.
  - e. Each courtroom in the Traffic Court Building.

This Order shall be filed with the Office of Judicial Records in a docket maintained for Administrative Orders issued by the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania. The Order and addendum shall be submitted to the Pennsylvania Bulletin for publication. Copies shall also be submitted to the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, The Legal Intelligencer, Jenkins Memorial Law Library, and the Law Library for the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania, and shall be posted on the website of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania: <http://www.courts.phila.gov/>.

**BY THE COURT:**

/s/ Nina Wright Padilla

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**NINA WRIGHT PADILLA,**  
President Judge, Court of Common Pleas  
Chair, Administrative Governing Board  
First Judicial District of Pennsylvania

**BY THE COURT:**

/s/ Daniel J. Anders

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**DANIEL J. ANDERS,**  
Administrative Judge, Court of Common Pleas  
Trial Division, First Judicial District of Pennsylvania

**BY THE COURT:**

/s/ Margaret T. Murphy

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**MARGARET T. MURPHY**  
Administrative Judge, Court of Common Pleas  
Family Division, First Judicial District of Pennsylvania

**BY THE COURT:**

/s/ T. Francis Shields

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**T. FRANCIS SHIELDS**  
President Judge, Philadelphia  
Municipal Court, First Judicial  
District of Pennsylvania

**BY THE COURT:**

/s/ Joffie C. Pittman, III

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**JOFFIE C. PITTMAN, III**  
Administrative Judge, Philadelphia  
Municipal Court, First Judicial  
District of Pennsylvania

**BY THE COURT:**

/s/ Shelia Woods-Skipper

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**SHEILA WOODS-SKIPPER**  
Administrative Judge, Court of  
Common Pleas, Orphans' Court  
First Judicial District of Pennsylvania