

Gwinnett Judicial Circuit

Guidelines for In-Court Judicial Proceedings

Pursuant to the Chief Justice's July 10, 2020 *Fourth Order Extending Declaration of Statewide Judicial Emergency*, the following guidelines for in-court proceedings are hereby established.

Safety is a major concern for anyone entering the courthouse. Anyone exhibiting symptoms of infection such as fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea, or having known close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19 are asked not to enter the building.

Everyone has a role to play in maintaining a healthy and safe courthouse. Please make every effort to be respectful of the well-being of everyone around you. Ask yourself the following:

- a. Have you traveled to or from any areas in which COVID-19 is particularly active?
- b. Have you within the past ten days experienced symptoms of COVID-19?
- c. Have you been in contact with someone known to have COVID-19 within the past 14 days?

If you are sick and have concerns about appearing in person or believe that you have been exposed, please notify your attorney or call or email the judge's office handling the case for which you have been summoned. Contact information for courts and other county offices can be found at www.gwinnettcourts.com.

1. GENERAL INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES

Everyone is strongly encouraged to use face masks while in the building. **However, a mask or face covering is now required for anyone entering a courtroom in which matters are being heard before the Court unless otherwise directed by the Court. Court employees must wear masks when away from their desk or office.**

We are requesting all visitors to the Courthouse to frequently wash or clean their hands. Public restrooms are available in the building with appropriate supplies. Hand sanitizer stations are located throughout the building and their use by all is encouraged. When possible, refrain from touching your face or mouth. Please cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough. Signage is placed throughout the building encouraging and reminding people to follow healthy practices recommended by the CDC.

We are requesting all visitors to the building to maintain appropriate social distancing, including maintaining a 6-foot separation from others whenever possible. Please do not congregate in

groups, particularly in public common areas, galleries of courtrooms, wells of the courtroom, hallways, elevators, restrooms, or other locations.

2. INCREASED HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES

Each Court and trial division may have additional measures in place and new procedures for conducting both video and in-person hearings. Please refer to any additional information contained in your court notice or instructions from the judge's staff.

All visitors who are members of a vulnerable population (such as persons over age 65, individuals with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised, such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy) are encouraged to bring their condition to the attention of the Court prior to any court appearance so that reasonable alternatives to appearing in person can be explored. Contact information for each Court is found at www.gwinnettcourts.com.

3. HEALTHY AND SAFE ACCESS TO THE COURTROOM

Public spaces are being frequently and appropriately cleaned within the building. Sanitizing supplies including wipes, sprays and hand sanitizers have been provided to staff for use in maintaining a clean and sanitary work environment.

Seating areas have been marked out to assist in maintaining distance from others. Wayfinding markers, pathways and route control devices are in use to encourage social distancing.

Courts will be regularly cleaned, as needed.

4. MAINTAINING A HEALTHY AND SAFE COURTROOM

Court schedules are being modified to limit the number of persons called in to the building by limiting the numbers of those summoned and staggering calendars. Courts may otherwise modify normal calendar practices by other means including the use of remote hearings. Additional attention will be given to scheduling proceedings in courtrooms with more limited seating capacity.

The Courts are working to limit or eliminate the need for close personal contact during judicial proceeding. The Courts are now utilizing video conferencing and other electronic meeting alternatives to the extent they are available and otherwise permitted by law.

If you have questions about video options that may be available in lieu of making a personal appearance, please contact the office of your assigned judge.

5. HEALTHY AND SAFE COURT EMPLOYEES

Court personnel, other employees and visitors to the building are being temperature screened when entering the building. Employees have been instructed to report potential exposure to their supervisors and self-quarantine if necessary. Employees have been instructed not to report to work if experiencing symptoms. Offices have instituted teleworking policies and are staggering work hours in an effort to minimize exposure.

Employees who work in a court facility that have a known or suspected COVID-19 exposure which is likely to result in infection, are required to isolate and quarantine.

When there is reason to believe that anyone who works or has visited a court facility has been exposed to COVID-19, an appropriate notification shall be made to DPH or the local health department.

6. HEALTHY AND SAFE JURORS

Pursuant to the Fourth Order Extending Judicial Emergency, jurors are not presently being summoned for service.

7. HEALTHY AND SAFE INMATES

Inmates are not being physically brought into any courtroom at this time. Instead, matters involving inmates are currently being handled using video conferencing technology.

GEORGE F. HUTCHINSON, III
CHIEF JUDGE, SUPERIOR COURT

PAMELA D. SOUTH
CHIEF JUDGE, STATE COURT

KRISTINA HAMMER BLUM
CHIEF MAGISTRATE

CHRISTOPHER A. BALLAR
PROBATE COURT JUDGE

ROBERT WALLER
PRESIDING JUDGE, JUVENILE COURT

MICHAEL GREENE
CHIEF JUDGE, RECORDER'S COURT