

## **A Message from the Gwinnett State Court Judges**

The State Court Judges and staff continue to work remotely and within the offices to maintain the operations of the State Court. Weekly meetings with our bench and with other offices and agencies keep us connected with unfolding events. **We remain available as needed to assist you, through phone or e-mail contact with our office.**

The newest extension of the Judicial Emergency will allow us to conduct some non-essential matters, in person and remotely, under safety guidelines established by the courts. We have begun to use remote hearings and will continue this practice to provide safety to all involved in the court process.

Divisions of State Court will post any new procedures and available forms on the website at [www.gwinnettcourts.com](http://www.gwinnettcourts.com).

**We are asking that for any in-person procedures, lawyers and litigants complete forms and paperwork in advance of the hearing to limit exposure. If you need a form, please contact the judicial assistant for the division if necessary.**

**Criminal Cases:** State Court criminal cases, including probation revocations and pleas at the detention center, continue on as scheduled prior to the Judicial Emergency, with our thanks to the Magistrates who preside over these matters. Our in-custody criminal cases remain at a low number due to constant review by the Judges, the Solicitors, and the Criminal Defense Bar.

***Weekly video court***, at 9 a.m. on Thursdays at GJAC in Courtroom 3B, is held by a State Court Judge each week. **Attorneys who want to be scheduled for video court should contact the State Court judicial assistant for the division to whom the case is assigned no later than Tuesdays at noon for scheduling and any further directions.**

***Remote competency evaluations*** are now being conducted by DBHDD. Bed space at regional hospitals still remains limited for restoration cases.

***Zoom hearings*** are being considered for other criminal matters when possible and when due process concerns can be met.

***Speedy trial demands*** are currently tolled, but the Court remains aware of the deadlines that will resume when jury trials are allowed.

***Accountability courts*** are still meeting with judges and staff through video conferencing

***Phone and video conferencing*** remains available. Judicial assistants can set up phone or video conferences with the State and the Defense on any issues regarding criminal cases.

**Civil Cases:** Many State Court divisions are currently setting video conference hearings, motions, and even preparing for the possibility of video conferenced bench trials. Divisions will send out instructions as needed regarding these hearings.

**Civil jury trials** remain stayed by the Judicial Emergency. The pandemic will provide more challenges to the eventual re-opening of jury trials. Judges are discussing safety and distancing issues for jurors; the new logistics that complicate trials during the pandemic; attendance hurdles for those summoned as jurors; and prioritizing cases for trial after the judicial stay is lifted. The Judges welcome attorneys to

assist us in shaping future calendars by conferring with opposing counsel. Agreements on issues such as using six instead of twelve person juries; consenting to a bench trial; or requesting a judicially hosted settlement conference will promote movement on cases long delayed by the pandemic.

***If your case is currently specially set for a jury trial later this year, please contact the judicial assistant for the division for further information.***

***If you have concerns about a pending case or scheduling, please do not hesitate to contact the State Court division to which the case is assigned.***

***And stay safe.***