

SUPERIOR COURTS OF THE MIDDLE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
STATE OF GEORGIA

STANDING ORDER FOR COURT PROCEDURES
DURING JUDICIAL EMERGENCY

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the Second Order Extending Declaration of Statewide Judicial Emergency entered on May 11, 2020, by the Hon. Harold D. Melton, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Georgia, the Superior Courts of the Middle Judicial Circuit of Georgia hereby adopt the following guidelines for in-court proceedings.

1. Directions for those who have, have been exposed to, or are especially vulnerable to, COVID-19:
 - a. Persons who have been diagnosed with COVID-19; who have been exposed to COVID-19 within 14 days; or who are experiencing fever or cough, should NOT attempt to enter the Courthouse, but should call the telephone number provided with your court notice, or at the Courthouse door, to speak with someone from the Court.
 - b. Persons with other health limitations which make them especially vulnerable to COVID-19 are invited to call the telephone number provided with your court notice, or at the door, to speak with someone from the Court.
2. Admission to the Courthouse. All persons entering the Courthouse SHALL:
 - a. Be screened for cough, fever and recent exposure to COVID-19.
 - b. Use hand sanitizer provided by security officers.
 - c. Wear a face mask at all times while in the public areas of the Courthouse (masks will be provided at the door if needed).
 - d. Comply with directives of court and security personnel regarding appropriate distancing.
3. Movement within the Courthouse. Persons within the Courthouse, outside of courtrooms, SHALL:
 - a. Stay at least six feet from all other persons (except those with whom they are related or with whom they traveled to court), to the extent practicable;
 - b. Not board elevators with other persons except those with whom they are related or with whom they traveled to court;
 - c. Wear a face mask at all times while in the public areas of the Courthouse,
 - d. Not congregate with other persons or loiter in the hallways in a way which obstructs other persons' access to the elevator or the courtrooms; and
 - e. Comply with directives of court and security personnel regarding appropriate distancing.
4. Admission to courtrooms. Persons entering the courtroom SHALL:
 - a. Sit only in designated areas of the pews;

- b. When notified that a courtroom is full, follow instructions for seating elsewhere;
- c. Wear a face mask at all times while in a courtroom or any other area of the Courthouse except as exempted by the Court and while speaking to the Court or testifying; and
- d. Comply with directives of court and security personnel regarding appropriate distancing.
- e. Due to the limited seating, persons with business before the Court are encouraged not to bring nonessential persons with them, especially children.
- f. Anyone using a pen supplied by the Court must return it as directed for cleaning.
- g. To allow for distanced seating, each person shall sit in a marked space on a pew. No one shall sit in a space not marked. If available, an additional area may be available for overflow seating where spectators may observe the proceedings by live audio-video stream. Persons with cases on the calendar shall be given priority for seating in the courtroom.
- h. Persons in the overflow seating areas designated shall maintain order and quiet so that everyone can see and hear the proceedings.
- i. Persons who have completed their business with the Court, or who simply want to observe court, are welcome to remain and attend, but may be required to sit in the overflow seating area so that persons with business with the Court can be seated in the active courtroom.
- j. If overflow seating is not available those with business before the Court will be given a number and will be called when their case is ready.

5. Special court procedures:

Due to the ongoing judicial emergency, the Court is employing special procedures to minimize the risk to everyone's health. To this end, we are scheduling more court sessions, with fewer cases summoned per session; seating in the courtroom will be limited to designated seats, designed to require distancing; and distancing will be enforced by Court bailiffs and Sheriff's deputies. Handling of paperwork will be kept to a minimum. Courtrooms will be sanitized between sessions.

6. Contempt of court:

The procedures outlined in this Order are necessary for the safe, efficient operation of the Court. Persons failing to observe these procedures may be cited for Contempt of Court.

SO ORDERED, this 13th day of May, 2020.


ROBERT S. REEVES, Chief Judge
Middle Judicial Circuit Superior Courts