

IN THE SUPERIOR COURTS OF THE NORTHERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

STATE OF GEORGIA

IN RE: COVID-19 PANDEMIC PROTOCOLS

ORDER

Filed by the court

JUNE 28, 2021

[Signature]
Judge Jeff MA/com

The undersigned Judges and the Chief Judge of the Superior Courts of the Northern Judicial Circuit have, since March, 2020, entered various Emergency and/or Standing Orders for the purposes of ensuring the safe operation of the Courts during the Covid-19 pandemic. These Orders have been entered in conjunction with Judicial Emergency Orders, and Extensions thereof, entered by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Georgia. The Orders of the Chief Justice are scheduled to terminate and thereby lapse on July 1, 2021.

In conjunction therewith, it is necessary that the Northern Judicial Circuit make appropriate plans to emerge from the existing State of Emergency, and it is therefore the Order of the Courts of the Northern Judicial Circuit that any and all previous requirements and guidelines pertaining to Covid-19 are hereby suspended and terminated, effective on July 1, 2021 at 12:01 A.M., except as otherwise provided for and continued by this Order.

As Covid-19 continues to pose a risk to public health, the Superior Court Judges of the Northern Judicial Circuit, in consultation with local health officials, will continue to take precautions in order to protect the health, safety and welfare of party litigants, attorneys, judges, court personnel, witnesses, jurors and the public.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED:

**I. PERSONS DIAGNOSED WITH COVID, EXHIBITING COVID SYMPTOMS, OR
EXPOSED TO COVID ARE NOT TO ENTER COURT FACILITIES.**

No person should enter any courthouse or judicial facility if he/she is experiencing the symptoms of Covid, have tested positive for Covid within the past fourteen (14) days, or have been exposed to a Covid positive individual within the past fourteen (14) days. Any person who has been compelled to appear at the Courthouse or judicial facility who is prohibited by the terms hereof from entering should contact the Clerk's office with his/her contact information. The Clerk will then contact the assigned Judge for further direction.

**II. VIRTUAL PROCEEDINGS TO BE CONTINUED IN CERTAIN
CIRCUMSTANCES.**

In criminal cases, bond hearings shall continue to be heard virtually, provided that upon request by counsel, those matters may be scheduled to take place in-person to allow the presentation of documentary evidence or the testimony of live witnesses. Further, in the event that a party or attorney requests that a civil or criminal proceeding be conducted virtually because of a health concern, including but not limited to a Covid diagnosis or exposure, the Presiding Judge may permit the hearing to take place virtually or may continue the matter, in the discretion of the Presiding Judge.

III. MASKS AND FACE COVERINGS.

Following CDC guidelines, visitors (which includes parties and attorneys) and courtroom staff who have been fully vaccinated are not required to wear a mask. Those who have not been vaccinated must wear a mask which covers both the mouth and nose while in the courtroom or judicial facility, and when interacting with others. Those entering the courtroom or judicial facility without a mask are **certifying** to the Court that they have been fully vaccinated.

IV. MASS CALENDARS TO BE AVOIDED.

While this Order relaxes Covid-19 related mandates, care should be taken to avoid “packed” courtrooms. Proceedings such as calendar calls and arraignment calendars may be staggered to avoid overcrowding, as may be determined by the Presiding Judge upon consultation with courtroom security.

V. JURY TRIALS.

The conduct of jury trials shall be under the discretion and direction of the Presiding Judge, in consultation with Courthouse security and public health officials. While priority is to be given to protection from Covid-19 exposure, the Presiding Judge shall have discretion as to the conduct of jury trial proceedings. This shall include procedures for voir dire, selection of juries, social distancing protocols, courtroom capacity, jury “boxes”, jury deliberation sites, mask requirements, and the testimony of witnesses.

VII. EFFECT ON OTHER COURTS.

This Order is further intended to provide guidance and recommendations to other Courts in the Northern Judicial Circuit, including State, Magistrate, Probate and Municipal Courts for such consideration as the Presiding Judges of those Courts shall determine appropriate.

VIII. DURATION.

The terms of this Order shall remain in effect until further Order of this Court.

SO ORDERED, this 28 day of June, 2021.



Jeffery S. Malcom
Chief Judge of Superior Courts
Northern Judicial Circuit



R. Chris Phelps
Judge of Superior Courts
Northern Judicial Circuit



Harvey S. Wasserman
Judge of Superior Courts
Northern Judicial Circuit