

MAGISTRATE COURT OF MUSCOGEE COUNTY
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 Magistrate Court of Columbus, Georgia, in consultation with the Georgia Department of Public Health, hereby adopts the following guidelines for in court proceedings.

1. **Purpose.** The purpose of these guidelines is to provide for public access to judicial proceedings and a criminal defendant's rights to confrontation and open courtrooms, while making reasonable provision for the health and safety of all litigants and all persons attending court or working in the Columbus Government Center, known also as the Government Center.
2. **Definitions.**
 - a. "Face Mask" means a covering of the mouth and nose but not the rest of the face.
 - b. "Government Center" means the Columbus, Georgia Government Center, 100 10th Street Columbus, Georgia.
 - c. "Public Area" means all parts of the Government Center not reserved for staff.
3. **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 Government Center. Such individuals should call the Magistrate Court Clerks Office at **(706) 653-4390** 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 above to speak with someone from the Court.
4. **Admission to the Government Center.** All persons entering the Government Center SHALL:
 - a. Be screened for cough, fever, and recent exposure to COVID-19
 - b. Wear a face mask at all times while in the public areas of the Government Center (provided at the door if needed).
 - c. Comply with directives of court and security personnel regarding appropriate distancing.
5. **Movement within the Government Center.** Persons within the Government Center, 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 are traveled to court), to the extent practicable, and

- b. Not board elevators with other persons except in compliance with subsection “a” above, and
 - c. Wear a face mask at all times while in the public areas of the Government Center, and
 - d. Not congregate or loiter in the hallways in a way which obstructs other persons’ access to elevators, offices or courtrooms, and
 - e. Comply with directives of court and security personnel regarding appropriate distancing.
6. **Admission to courtrooms.** Persons entering the Municipal/ Magistrate courtroom or waiting areas on the 8th floor of the Government Center shall:
- a. Sit in one and only one designated seat in the courtroom, and
 - b. When notified that a room is full, follow instructions for seating elsewhere, and
 - c. Wear a face mask at all times while in the courtroom or any conference room, 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 space marked with a tab. No one shall sit in a space not tabbed. Persons with cases on the calendar shall be given priority for seating in the active courtroom.
 - h. Waiting areas shall maintain order and quiet so that everyone can see and hear the proceedings in the active courtroom.
7. **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 in conferences with staff. Handling of paperwork will be kept to a minimum. Court personnel will sanitize areas of the courtroom between users.
8. **Contempt of court.** The procedures outlined in this Order are necessary for the safe, efficient operation of the Court. Persons failing to observe these the procedures may be attached for contempt of Court.

SO ORDERED, this 14th day of May, 2020.

Steven D. Smith
Judge, Magistrate Court of Muscogee
County, Georgia