

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF FAYETTE COUNTY  
STATE OF GEORGIA

In re: Courthouse Guidelines for COVID-19 )  
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CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT  
FAYETTE COUNTY, GEORGIA  
2020 JUN 1 PM 4 40  
SHERIFF OF COURTHOUSE, CLERK

COURTHOUSE GUIDELINES

The following guidelines are hereby adopted by this Court for hearings to be held in person pursuant to Section 4 of the Supreme Court of Georgia’s Judicial Emergency Order, filed May 11, 2020.

1.

Video Conferencing is encouraged, where feasible, practical, or agreed to by all parties.

2.

The Sheriff shall display, at the courthouse entrance, a sign conforming to the requirements set forth in the “Second Order Extending Declaration of Statewide Judicial Emergency” filed May 11, 2020, referenced above. Said signage shall state the requirement that all persons seeking entry must respond to minimal, but necessary, questions concerning whether they currently have COVID-19 or certain recognizable symptoms of the disease. The Sheriff shall make those inquiries of those individuals who seek to enter through the front doors of the courthouse and shall also administer an infrared test of the temperature of each such person. Entry shall be denied according to the Center for Disease Control, (hereafter “CDC”) guidelines. This will include anyone with a fever, having been exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 30 days, or having traveled outside the United States within the last 30 days, or who has other symptoms such as shortness of breath, cough, chills, or respiratory problems. When the Sheriff denies entry to an individual, the Sheriff shall inquire if said individual is a court

litigant or witness, and if so, shall promptly notify the presiding Judge and Clerk. All individuals making entry into the courthouse are strongly encouraged to wear a mask to prevent the spread of COVID-19. All elected officials and/or department heads shall be responsible for applying CDC guidelines.

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The Sheriff and Judge presiding over court shall instruct all courtroom attendees to be respectful to others and observe all social distancing recommendations by the CDC, including maintaining a distance of at least six feet from others. No more than two individuals will sit at either of the attorney tables. The first bench behind each table shall be reserved for the respective attorney's staff. To further assist with compliance, the courtroom, and all other rooms within the courthouse where courtroom attendees may be sequestered shall be marked with green tape. Sneeze guards shall be available for all staff members sitting at or near the Judge's bench in all courtrooms. Hand sanitizer shall be available for all courtroom attendees. Sanitizer will be provided at each podium for the ease of sanitation between parties. The microphones, desktops, and other commonly touched items within the courtroom shall be sanitized before and after each hearing.

Public areas shall be marked to denote and encourage the proper social distance of six (6) feet. All public bathrooms shall have signage that encourages hand washing. Stairways shall be clearly marked for one-way traffic to encourage social distancing. Each office within the courthouse may utilize appointments for certain services to limit individuals in the building. Any office setting appointments shall provide court services a courtesy list daily.

Masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE) shall be available for those within the courtroom and their use is highly encouraged, but not required. Each Judge has the authority to require masks and other protective equipment as he or she deems necessary for each hearing.

Every reasonable accommodation shall be made for individuals age 65 and older, and those with pre-existing conditions recognized by the CDC as rendering an individual at an increased risk of COVID-19. Such accommodations may include excusing the individual from attendance, isolating the individual from other attendees, permitting that individual to participate via videoconference, etc. The jury assembly room will be available to all Judges and courtrooms to sequester any individual that is found to be in a high-risk category. The elevators shall be clearly marked for the sole use of individuals with physical impairments. If said individual is accompanied by members of the same household, those individuals may use the elevator at the same time as the impaired individual. Every effort shall be made to sanitize the elevator after each use.

For court hearings that cannot be accomplished via videoconferencing, the time for hearings shall be staggered as to reduce the number of persons present in the courtroom who are involved in matters other than the ongoing hearing. Should the number of persons present in any portion of the courthouse exceed that number resulting in the inability to remain safely distant from others in that room or space, the Sheriff shall request those individuals who are not essential to the hearing to move to an area outside the courthouse. In determining who is essential to the hearing, the Sheriff may consult with the Judge. Priority seating shall be given to all litigants of the ongoing hearing and their attorneys, necessary court personnel, members of the press, supporters of the litigants, and the general public, in that order. The sidewalks and entry into the courthouse shall be marked with tape or signage at six-foot intervals. Those individuals waiting to enter must maintain the separation required by CDC social distancing.

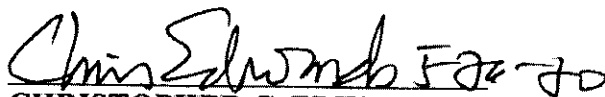
All public defenders and private criminal attorneys are highly encouraged to meet with their clients prior to any video court hearing or in person hearing as court time is very limited.

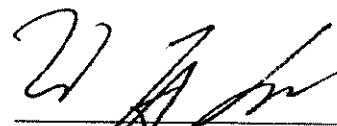
All criminal attorneys are hereby notified that if they have a client who is an inmate in the Fayette County Jail, any violation of the CDC social distancing guidelines shall result in the inmate being quarantined once he or she is returned to the Fayette County Jail.


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These guidelines shall be distributed to all elected officials and department heads with offices in the Courthouse. The guidelines shall be recorded on the minutes of the Superior Court. The guidelines shall be made available on the website of the Clerk of Superior Court, distributed to the Fayette County Bar Association and shall be posted in prominent places within, and at the entrance to, the courthouse. A copy of the CDC Guidelines for COVID-19 shall also be posted on the website of the Clerk of Court. When the Clerk notices all parties for hearings, the Clerk shall include an additional letter outlining these guidelines with court each notice. These guidelines shall become effective immediately upon the signatures listed hereinbelow.

SO ORDERED this 29th day of May 2020.

  
**CHRISTOPHER C. EDWARDS**  
Chief Judge, Superior Court  
Griffin Judicial Circuit

 5-26-20  
**W. FLETCHER SAMS**  
Judge, Superior Court  
Griffin Judicial Circuit

 5-26-20  
**SCOTT L. BALLARD**  
Judge, Superior Court  
Griffin Judicial Circuit

 5-26-20  
**BENJAMIN D. COKER**  
Judge, Superior Court  
Griffin Judicial Circuit

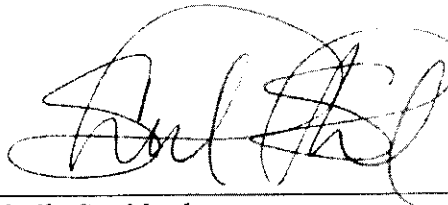
IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF FAYETTE COUNTY  
STATE OF GEORGIA

**CLERKS CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that I have sent a true and correct copy of the foregoing **COURTHOUSE GUIDELINES WITH EXHIBITS** filed in the Fayette County Superior Court Minutes by distributing said document in the internal mail room of the Fayette County Justice Center, to all persons and departments listed below.

Chief Judge Christopher Edwards  
Hon. W. Fetcher Sams  
Hon. Scott L. Ballard  
Hon. Benjamin D. Coker  
Hon. Jason B. Thompson  
Chief Magistrate Bob Ruppenthal  
Hon. James White  
Hon. Kathy Brown Valencia  
Hon. Christie Dunkelberger  
Hon. Stephen Ott  
Hon. Ann Jackson  
Sheriff Barry Babb  
Hon. Marie Broder  
Hon. Jamie Inagawa  
Mr. Allen Adams (US Mail)  
Mr. Steve Rapson (US Mail)

This 1st day of June, 2020



Sheila Studdard  
Clerk of Court  
Fayette County, Georgia

2020 JUN 1 PM 4 59  
SHEILA STUDDARD, CLERK  
CLERK OF COURT  
AND CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT  
FAYETTE COUNTY, GA.