

April 1, 2020

Each day of this pandemic has passed more quickly than the day before, as we live from moment to moment in unsettling times. Juvenile Court Judges, around this state and across this nation for that matter, strive to ensure the work that is done continues to pave a pathway to restoration and rehabilitation for children and families. They do not do this work alone.

In Georgia, the Council of Juvenile Court Judges actively supports the work of all of the juvenile court judges, being certain to focus on the individual needs of Georgia's varied communities, both rural and urban, as support is given to broaden the collaboration with stakeholders and state and community partners within the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare system. Likewise, the Council has engaged with the judges in their efforts to navigate the response needed for our communities to ensure the constitutional safeguards are adhered to during this crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the leadership of the Supreme Court of Georgia, juvenile court judges have been actively engaged in the alignment of a plan that will ensure overall compliance with the requirements of the Judicial Emergency Order executed by Chief Justice Harold Melton.

All of the courts have acted to promote social and physical distancing as directed by Governor Brian Kemp to impede the aggressive spread of the COVID-19 virus. The courts continue to explore additional ways to implement procedures that support the ability to conduct virtual hearings and address legal issues which are unique to the jurisdiction of the juvenile courts.

In order to reduce public, work place and small gatherings designed for the engagement of children and families to the greatest extent possible, judges and court personnel, who are not required to staff operations may perform such duties while working remotely. Consequently, judges and court staff are working and accessible by telephone and other electronic modalities as their duties and responsibilities may allow. As each juvenile court has determined the most appropriate way to protect and provide services to their community, there may be variance among them.

In closing, accurate information is the key to navigating during this crisis, thus each community member in need of service is encouraged to contact their local juvenile court for current status and detailed information.