

**BANKS COUNTY PROBATE COURT**  
**GUIDELINES FOR COURT PROCEEDINGS**

The following guidelines pertain to court proceedings held in the Banks County Probate Court.

- 1) The Court will follow the ***“public health guidance”*** provided by the federal Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) and the local health department regarding the guidelines for in-court proceedings.
- 2) Upon notice of the date and time of an in-court proceeding to the parties thereof, the Court will request that each party notify the Court as to how many witnesses or other persons will be attending the proceeding.
- 3) When arriving at the courthouse for an in-court proceeding all persons will be screened as outlined in the ***“Guidelines for Screening Visitors at the Entrance to a Courthouse”***, which has been provided to Courts by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) with input from experts at the Georgia Department of Public Health. ***Screening will take place outside the courthouse in designated location(s).***
- 4) All parties allowed into the courthouse after screening will be asked to follow verbal instructions as well as the signage posted in various locations which will designate route to courtroom as well as entry and exit points. To comply with social distancing, a limited number of people will be allowed into the courtroom and seating locations will be marked on the benches.
- 5) Should a party or witness to a proceeding not meet the screening requirements for entry into the courthouse they will be provided the number to the Court and asked to contact Court for instructions.

- 6) Cases will be staggered to allow for sanitizing between proceedings.
- 7) Masks are encouraged to be worn by all parties.
- 8) Filings are encouraged through the mail but may be filed by appointment. Marriage Licenses, Vital Records, Weapons Permits, and Oaths are processed by appointment only to limit the number of people in the Probate Office.

### **Traffic Court Proceedings**

- 1) "Guidelines for in Court Proceedings" will be followed.
- 2) Defendants will sign in outside courthouse in a designated area once screened, leaving their name and telephone number.
- 3) Once capacity has been reached in courtroom, others will be asked to remain in their vehicle until notified by telephone to proceed to courtroom.
- 4) Courtroom will be sanitized between proceedings.

## **Guidelines for Screening Visitors At the Entrance to a Courthouse**

The following suggestions come from public health experts at the Georgia Department of Public Health. Courts may use these guidelines at their discretion. Keep in mind that screening is an action taken after the following actions have already been implemented: (1) eliminate all non-critical functions, (2) impose social distancing among employees and visitors, and (3) urge anyone not feeling well to self-isolate at home.

\*Conduct the screening outside or in a designated area;

\*Ask whether the visitor is experiencing fever, any shortness of breath, persistent cough or sore throat, or any other symptoms of respiratory infection, or has experienced such symptoms and is currently subject to Georgia Department of Public Health's Isolation Protocol (or post a notice listing those symptoms in a prominent location);

\*Ask whether the visitor has traveled to an area or location with widespread, ongoing transmission of Coronavirus (COVID-19) within the last 14 days, per CDC guidelines, or has been exposed to COVID-19 within the last 14 days;

\*Take each person's temperature using a no-touch thermometer;

The person taking visitors' temperature should wear gloves, a surgical mask and face shield;

\*Prohibit entrance by anyone with a temperature of 100.4 or higher;

Note that, as the weather grows increasingly warm, screening will produce increased false results unless individuals are allowed to cool down first;

\*Prohibit any person meeting either the respiratory infection symptoms, travel or exposure criteria, or the temperature criteria from entering the building;

\*Provide hand sanitizer and/or face masks for those entering the building.

Persons prohibited from entering the building should be given a telephone number or other means to contact court officials regarding alternative means of pursuing critical judicial matters.

Helen Hewell, Judge

Banks County Probate Court

June 17, 2020