

**IN THE OGLETHORPE COUNTY MAGISTRATE COURT
STATE OF GEORGIA
COVID 19 COURT OPERATING GUIDELINES**

PURSUANT TO THE THIRD ORDER EXTENDING DECLARATION OF STATEWIDE JUDICIAL EMERGENCY DATED JUNE 12, 2020, THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES BASES ON THE "GEORGIA COURT REOPENING GUIDE" FOR CONDUCTING COURT PROCEEDINGS SHALL BE EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY:

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STANDING ORDER IS TO REDUCE THE TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19 AMONG COURT EMPLOYEES AND THE PUBLIC, MAINTAIN HEALTHY COURT OPERATIONS AND FACILITIES FOR THE PUBLIC, MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENT FOR COURT EMPLOYEES, EXERCISE FLEXIBILITY WHEN APPLYING THESE GUIDELINES TO ENSURE EACH LITIGANT RECEIVES A FAIR HEARING AS REQUIRED BY LAW, AND TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF NORMALIZING THE OPERATIONS OF THE MAGISTRATE COURT.

PUBLIC ADMISSION AND SCREENING:

IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE HEALTH OF LITIGANTS, LAWYERS, JUDGES, COURT PERSONNEL AND THE PUBLIC THE FOLLOWING WILL APPLY:

- 1- ANYONE ENTERING THE OFFICES OF OGLETHORPE MAGISTRATE COURT MUST WEAR A MASK. IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO PROCURE A MASK THE COURT WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH ONE.**
- 2- HAND SANITIZER IS AVAILABLE AT THE FRONT LOBBY COUNTER.**
- 3- HEARINGS WILL BE CONDUCTED IN A COURTROOM WHERE THERE IS A GLASS PARTITION BETWEEN THE JUDGE-COURT PERSONNEL AND LITIGANTS-LAWYERS.**

FILED
OGLETHORPE COUNTY
MAGISTRATE COURT

JUN 22 2020

S. Stephens
MAGISTRATE/CLERK

- 4- **INDIVIDUALS ENTERING INSIDE THE OFFICES OF THE COURT WILL HAVE THEIR TEMPERATURE TAKEN BY THE SECURITY OFFICER AND/OR CLERK WITH A DEVICE THAT CHECKS YOUR FOREHEAD FOR THE PRESENCE OF A FEVER.**
- 5- **PERSONS WHO ANSWER YES TO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING MAY BE DENIED ENTRANCE TO THE COURTROOM:**
- A. WHETHER OR NOT THEY HAVE TRAVELED TO OR FROM ANY AREAS BEYOND THE BORDERS OF THE UNITED STATES WITHIN THE PAST THIRTY(30) DAYS.**
- B. IF THEY HAVE, WITHIN THE PAST TEN DAYS, EXPERIENCED SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19, INCLUDING: COUGH, SHORTNESS OF BREATH OR DIFFICULTY BREATHING, FEVER ABOVE 100.0 DEGREES, CHILLS, MUSCLE PAIN, SORE THROAT, HEADACHE, OR NEW LOSS OF TASTE OR SMELL.**
- C. IF THEY HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH SOMEONE KNOWN TO HAVE COVID-19 WITHIN THE LAST FOURTEEN (14) DAYS.**
- D. IF THEY HAVE A FEVER OF 100.0 DEGREES OR HIGHER OR WHO HAVE REPORTED A FEVER ABOVE 100.0 DEGREES IN THE PAST 72 HOURS.**

IF AN INDIVIDUAL WITH A SCHEDULED COURT DATE IS PROHIBITED FROM ENTERING THE COURTROOM FOR ANY OF THE ABOVE REASONS, THE CASE WILL BE CONTINUED UNTIL THE NEXT TERM OF COURT.

EVERYONE IN THE COURTROOM AND PUBLIC AREAS SHOULD COMPLY WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEEP A SIX (6) FOOT DISTANCE FROM OTHER PERSONS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

IF AN INDIVIDUAL WITH A SCHEDULED COURT DATE HAS OTHER LIMITATIONS, E.G., AGE OR HEALTH, WHICH MAKE THEM ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE TO COVID-19 OR HAVE OTHER CONCERNS WITH ENTERING THE COURTROOM, SHOULD CONTACT THE COURT IMMEDIATELY TO REQUEST THAT THEIR CASE BE RESCHEDULED.

INDIVIDUALS ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO LEAVE ANY UNNECESSARY BELONGS IN THEIR VEHICLE OR AT HOME IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE SURFACES FOR POSSIBLE INFECTION.

PERSONS ENTERING THE COURTROOM MUST COMPLY WITH THE DIRECTIONS GIVEN BY THE STAFF WITH RESPECT TO SEATING AND SOCIAL DISTANCING. THE COURT SHALL DETERMINE THE CAPACITY IN ITS SOLE DISCRETION.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING:

ALL EFFORTS WILL BE MADE TO HAVE COURT AND/OR COUNTY PERSONNEL CLEAN AND DISINFECT AREAS OF THE COURTROOM BETWEEN USERS PER RECOMMENDED GUIDANCE. ALL STAFF AND THE PUBLIC ARE ENCOURAGED TO FOLLOW BEST PRACTICES TO PREVENT INFECTION, INCLUDING FREQUENT HAND WASHING FOR AT LEAST 20 SECONDS WITH SOAP AND WATER. HAND SANITIZER WILL BE AVAILABLE ON THE TABLE IN THE COURTROOM.

VIRTUAL COURT PROCEEDINGS:

JUDGES OF THE MAGISTRATE COURT WILL CONTINUE TO USE TECHNOLOGY TO PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE TO IN-PERSON PROCEEDINGS FOR THE ISSUANCE OF CRIMINAL ARREST WARRANTS AND BOND HEARINGS.

INHERENT POWER:

NOTHING IN THIS PROPOSED PLAN SHALL BE CONSTRUED TO LIMIT THE INHERENT POWER OF THE COURT. EACH ASSIGNED JUDGE MAY DIRECT AND CONTROL THEIR RESPECTIVE CASES AND THOSE PERSONS BEFORE THEM IN THEIR COURTROOM AS THEY DEEM NECESSARY FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE. THIS ORDER SHALL BE IN EFFECT UNTIL FURTHER MODIFICATION, EXTENSION OR TERMINATION. THIS ORDER IS APPLICABLE TO THE OPERATION AND CONDUCT OF THE MAGISTRATE COURT.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

A COPY OF THIS STANDING ORDER SHALL BE AVAILABLE AT THE CLERK'S DESK, POSTED ON THE FRONT ENTRANCE OF THE MAGISTRATE COURT, POSTED ON THE OGLETHORPE COUNTY MAGISTRATE COURT WEBSITE AND A COPY WILL BE SENT TO THE CLERK OF SUPREME COURT AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS.

SO ORDERED, THIS 17TH DAY OF JUNE, 2020.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gail Smith". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

**GAIL SMITH
CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE
OGLETHORPE COUNTY, GEORGIA**