

**IN THE STATE COURT OF SPALDING COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA**

**STANDING ORDER TEMPORARILY MODIFYING COURT PROCEDURES
DUE TO CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19**

The State Court of Spalding County, Georgia, in observation of the guidelines set forth by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) as well as the Georgia Department of Public Health (“DPH”) concerning the outbreak of coronavirus/COVID-19, and in adherence to 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, hereby adopts the following guidelines for in-court proceedings until further notice:

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 persons attending court or working in the Courthouse.

2. **Contempt of Court**

The procedures outlined in this Order are necessary for the safe, efficient operation of the Court. Persons failing to observe these procedures may be attached for contempt of Court, which is punishable by up to 20 days in jail and a fine of up to \$1,000.00.

3. **Definitions**

- a. “Court” means the Spalding County State Court.
- b. “Courthouse” means the Spalding County Courthouse located at 132 E. Solomon Street, Griffin, Georgia.
- c. “Courtroom” means any physical space which is utilized by the Spalding County State Court to conduct hearings.
- d. “Face mask” means a surgical mask, N-95 respirator, or other cloth face covering as defined by the CDC which fits over the mouth and nose of the wearer but not the rest of the face.
- e. “Public Area” means all parts of the Courthouse not reserved exclusively for staff.
- f. “Virtual Courtroom” means the online space designated for videoconference hearings hosted by the Spalding County State Court, located at: <https://spaldingcountygov.webex.com/meet/SpaldingCountyStateCourt>

4. **Special Court Procedures**

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and 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.

So that all persons may have access to observe all public Court proceedings without having to physically enter a Courtroom or the Courthouse, a live-stream will be available for viewing online at: www.facebook.com/SpaldingCountyStateCourt any time the State Court is in-session and on the record (Note: It is not necessary to have a Facebook account to view the State Court live stream).

To further limit the number of people physically within the Courthouse, provisions have been made for many persons with official business before the Court to appear virtually. Accordingly, all persons appearing before the State Court are encouraged to check the notice or summons they received in the mail to confirm whether they have been granted permission and provided instructions on how to appear virtually for their court date. For further information or questions regarding virtual appearances, please contact the Court by phone (770-467-4474) or by email to the Court's Staff Attorney (Alexander Hope – ahope@spaldingcounty.com).

All persons who have been granted permission to appear virtually shall be present in the online lobby/waiting area of the Virtual Courtroom located at <https://spaldingcountygov.webex.com/meet/SpaldingCountyStateCourt> on the date and at the time they were instructed to appear in their Summons and wait until their case is called by the Judge, the same as they would if they were physically present in a Courtroom.

The Virtual Courtroom lobby is available 24/7 but requires visitors to be granted access by the Court to enter the online hearing space and to participate in live court proceedings. Persons waiting to be called in the Virtual Courtroom lobby are encouraged to follow the ongoing proceedings of the State Court via the live stream located at: www.facebook.com/SpaldingCountyStateCourt (Note: It is not necessary to have a Facebook account to view the State Court live stream).

5. **Directions for those who have, are suspected to have, have been in close contact with persons, or are considered especially vulnerable to, COVID-19**

Persons who in the preceding 14 days:

- a. have received a positive lab-confirmed test for COVID-19;
- b. are suspected to have COVID-19 based on symptoms recognized by the CDC or DPH;
- c. have experienced a fever or cough;
- d. have been in close contact with a person with known or suspected COVID-19; or
- e. have other health conditions which make them especially vulnerable to COVID-19 as recognized by the CDC or DPH

SHOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO ENTER THE COURTHOUSE, and should call the telephone number provided with your court notice, or at the door, to speak with someone from the Court about appearing virtually or rescheduling their court date.

6. **Admission to the Courthouse**

All persons entering the Courthouse for any purpose tied to the business of the Spalding County State Court SHALL:

- a. **WEAR A FACE MASK AT ALL TIMES;**
- b. be screened for cough, fever and recent exposure to COVID-19;
- c. be provided with a copy of this Order; and
- d. comply with directives of court and security personnel regarding appropriate distancing and compliance with the terms of this Order.

7. **Movement within the Courthouse**

All persons within the Courthouse for any purpose tied to the business of the Spalding County State Court, SHALL:

- a. **WEAR A FACE MASK AT ALL TIMES;**
- b. stay AT LEAST 6 feet from all other persons with whom they do not share a household;
- c. not board elevators with other persons except those with whom they share a household;
- 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 compliance with the terms of this Order.

8. **Admission to a Courtroom**

To limit the number of people physically within the Courthouse, all persons required to appear before the Court are encouraged to check the notice or summons they received in the mail to confirm whether they have been granted permission and provided instructions on how to appear virtually for their court date. For further information or questions regarding virtual appearances, all persons may reach out to the Court by phone (770-467-4474) or by email to the Court's Staff Attorney (Alexander Hope – ahope@spaldingcounty.com).

All persons appearing virtually shall be in the Virtual Courtroom lobby located at <https://spaldingcountygov.webex.com/meet/SpaldingCountyStateCourt> at the date and at the time they were instructed to appear in their Summons and wait until their case is called, the same as they would if they were physically present in a Courtroom.

In order to follow along with the Court proceedings that are in-progress while waiting to be called in the Virtual Courtroom lobby, all persons are encouraged to follow the live stream at: www.facebook.com/SpaldingCountyStateCourt (Note: It is not necessary to have a Facebook account to view the State Court live stream).

Persons physically entering the Courtrooms, chambers, conference rooms, waiting areas, or any other area of the State Court SHALL:

- a. **WEAR A FACE MASK AT ALL TIMES;**

- b. stay AT LEAST 6 feet away from all other persons with whom they do not share a household, at all times;
- c. comply with directives of court and security personnel regarding their compliance with the terms of this Order;
- d. only sit or stand only in the area they are designated by the Court to be within at a given time in a given room which, to allow for distanced seating, may be marked by the Court with a tab (No one shall sit or stand within the Courtroom in a space not tabbed or where they do not otherwise have prior permission from the Court to be);
when notified that a room is full, follow instructions for seating/standing elsewhere;
- e. due to the limited seating, have official business before the Court (persons deemed nonessential, such as friends, family members and/or children who are not a named defendant, witness or otherwise necessary for the adjudication of a particular case, may be asked to leave the Courtroom and/or Courthouse);
- f. return any office supplies, such as pens, pencils or clipboards, to the Court as directed for cleaning;
- g. maintain order and quiet so that everyone can see and hear the proceedings in the Courtroom; and
- h. exit the Courtroom after they have completed their business with the Court.

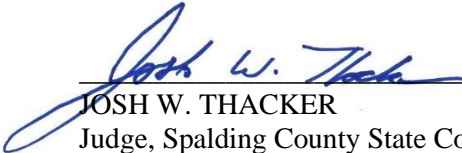
All persons desiring or instructed to appear virtually before the Court on a walk-in basis may enter the Virtual Courtroom lobby located at <https://spaldingcountygov.webex.com/meet/SpaldingCountyStateCourt> during any court session and wait to be addressed by the Court, the same as they would be able to do if they were physically present in the Courtroom.

9. Meetings in State Court Chambers, Drop-Ins and Deliveries

No persons other than those staff members with offices inside the State Court Chambers should enter or attempt to enter the chambers of the State Court without making prior arrangements with the Court. Unscheduled drop-ins or knock-and-talks are strongly discouraged. To the greatest extent possible, all persons needing to reach a member of the State Court staff are encouraged to please call or email a member of the State Court team.

Additionally, all persons needing to deliver mail, documents or other physical items to the State Court should place those items in the State Court mailbox slot in the Courthouse lobby. A member of the Court Services team (recognizable as the uniformed law enforcement officers with the Spalding County Sherriff’s Office stationed in the Courthouse lobby) should be notified if an oversized item needs to be left in the Courthouse lobby for delivery to the State Court.

SO ORDERED, this 22nd day of May, 2020.



 JOSH W. THACKER
 Judge, Spalding County State Court