



## IN THE MUNICIPAL COURT OF ALBANY, GEORGIA

**RE: ALBANY MUNICIPAL COURT REOPENING GUIDELINES** : **ORDER 2020-07**  
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### **Overview**

As Municipal Court reopens, certain general practices will be followed to ensure the health and safety of both court employees and the public. This COVID-19 policy and general practices are designed to meet the unique needs of the Albany Municipal Court and its challenges of resuming operations in the wake of the public health emergency caused by COVID-19. Please see the Albany Municipal Court Reopening Guidelines [here](#).

### **Guiding Principles of the Court**

- 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.

#### **I. General Infection Control Measures**

It is required that all employees and the public wear a mask or face covering when entering the Municipal Courtroom. A mask will be provided to employees and members of the public, who do not have one, seeking entry into the Municipal Courtroom.

Court staff has requested personnel clean and sanitize bathrooms and other areas more frequently and adequately to control the transmission of COVID-19.

The public will be provided with access to hand sanitizer stations inside and outside the courtroom.

Municipal Court currently has a glass shield in the public section of the office and Lexan will be installed in the Municipal Courtroom in areas that do not allow for social distancing.

Employees and the public are permitted to wear their own protective equipment, including a face covering.



Municipal Court will strive to coordinate our efforts with other departments in the judicial building to ensure uniform practices throughout the facility.

Municipal Court staff will isolate persons who become symptomatic while in the facility until they are able to leave and remove others from any rooms they have occupied and execute the appropriate safe hygiene practices for that space.

## **II. Provide Notice to the Public of Increased Health and Safety Measures**

In addition to sending out rescheduling letters to defendants of their new court date and time, Municipal Court is also including a COVID-19 notice that includes the language, 'the court has taken certain health and safety measures to limit the transmission of COVID-19.'

The Municipal Court building entrance sign and check-in area sign will contain guidelines used to provide notice to the court staff if anyone has the following issues:

- Is currently infected with COVID-19 or in quarantine due to exposure to a person with COVID-19
- Is a member of an immune-compromised or medically fragile population (or living in a household with someone who is immune-compromised or medically fragile)
- Is over age 65
- Has small children but does not have child care due to COVID-19
- Needs an interpreter

Municipal Court also has signage that provides the public with instructions on how to comply with health and safety measures, as well as floor and seat markings encouraging social distancing.

## **III. Provide Healthy and Safe Access to the Courtroom**

### Screening

Albany Municipal Court has a process to screen individuals for COVID-19 before entering the courtroom by asking a series of questions to each individual upon entry to the building. If a visitor answers yes to any of the questions, they will be denied entry. The reason will be stated on the form and their court case will be rescheduled to a later date.



### Staging

Municipal Court is committed to prevent individuals from congregating as much as possible while waiting to access the courtroom. We have designed a process to facilitate social distancing while individuals wait to enter the courtroom, sit in the courtroom, and exit the courtroom including floor and seat markings to keep individuals six feet apart.

### Flow

Municipal Court has designed a flow plan to control the route that people will take through the building to access the courtroom that encourages social distancing. It includes the following:

- Placing arrows on the floors to direct foot traffic
- Requiring people to enter through one door and exit through another.
- Staff notifying visitors of no more than two people per elevator and offer the stairs as an alternative route

## **IV. Maintain a Healthy and Safe Courtroom**

Court staff and defendants will maintain 6 feet of social distancing inside the courtroom.

Due to limited space, the Albany Municipal Court proceedings can be viewed via live stream at City of Albany – [Municipal Court YouTube Channel](#).

Court clerks and Court Marshals will assist in rotating visitors in and out of the courtroom as quickly as possible to limit contact.

Municipal Court staff are to sanitize the courtroom after each day's sessions as follows:

- Spray the entire court room with disinfectant spray (includes workstation and equipment)
- Wipe down chair handles, keyboards, pens, pencils, stylus, door handles and any other surfaces prone to touch
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using disinfectant spray or wipes including the seating areas

### Staggering Scheduling

To maintain adequate social distancing, we will schedule staggered arrival times for participants in proceedings to ensure a manageable spacing of individuals arriving at the courthouse. We will have court sessions on Mondays, Wednesdays and Friday. Each day will consist of three sessions: 9am, 11am and 2pm.

Municipal Court will have no more than twenty (20) defendants per court session.



**V. Healthy and Safe Court Employees**

Employees should notify their supervisor immediately and stay home if they are sick. In addition to all the normal things you do to stay healthy, the preventive measures are the same as for the flu or other viruses, according to CDC:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect your office and frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe daily.
- When in contact with the public or while working with other staff and a distance of 6 feet or more cannot be maintained, a mask shall be worn in order to decrease the possible spread of a virus.
- Per the City of Albany Human Resources department guidelines, employees who exhibit signs of illness such as cough, sneezing, red eyes temperatures are to be checked with a no-contact thermometer.
- During court sessions and interactions with the public, court staff are to wear the following PPE: mask and/or face shield (gloves are optional).

The Marshalls assigned to the Albany Municipal Court shall enforce the guidelines.

So Ordered this 28<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2020.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Willie C. Weaver Sr.", enclosed within a blue oval scribble.

Chief Judge Willie C. Weaver, Sr.  
Albany Municipal Court

# Municipal Court Reopening Guidelines



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# 1



## General Infection Control Measures

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- ✓ Court staff has requested personnel clean and sanitize bathrooms and other areas more frequently and adequately to control the transmission of COVID-19.
- ✓ The public will be provided with access to hand sanitizer stations inside and outside the courtroom.
- ✓ Municipal Court currently has a glass shield in the public section of the office and Lexan will be installed in the Municipal Courtroom in areas that do not allow for social distancing.
- ✓ Employees and the public are permitted to wear their own protective equipment, including a face covering.
- ✓ Municipal Court will strive to coordinate our efforts with other departments in the judicial building to ensure uniform practices throughout the facility.
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# 2



## Provide Notice to the Public of Increased Health and Safety Measures

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