

**JUVENILE COURT OF GLYNN COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA**

**COVID-19
REOPENING GUIDELINES**

On August 17, 2020, the Juvenile Court of Glynn County will recommence in-court hearings in delinquency/unruly and some dependency and other civil cases which, under the circumstances of those cases, cannot be heard via video conferencing and, therefore, necessitate in-court appearances.

Until the Statewide Judicial Emergency declared by the Georgia Supreme Court has been lifted, dependency, TPR and other civil proceedings shall continue to be held virtually through Skype for Business or other virtual medium, unless that is deemed to be impossible.

In order 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, and**
- Exercise flexibility when applying these guidelines to ensure each litigant is afforded a fair hearing as required by law,**

1.

The following infection control measures **shall** be followed:

- All employees and the public shall wear a mask or face covering when entering the court facility and continue to wear a mask until they have exited said court facility. If a person presents without a mask or face covering, the Court will provide one. Employees and the public may wear their own protective equipment, including a face covering.
- All persons entering the court facility shall be screened by a Glynn County Deputy Sheriff staffing the security desk of the court facility with an infrared

thermometer. If such testing results in an external temperature of 100.0 degrees or higher, that person must immediately leave the building.

- Immediately upon entry to the Juvenile Court facility, the Court's staff shall be screened by a designated person with an infrared thermometer and enter their temperatures into a daily log. If an employee presents with an infrared temperature of 100.0 degrees or higher, the employee shall **immediately**: advise his/her supervisor; make an appointment for a COVID-19 test and self-quarantine for 14 days or until a negative COVID-19 test is produced.
- Any employee or other person present in said Court facility who is symptomatic shall be isolated until they are able to leave and others shall be removed from any rooms that person may have occupied.
- The court will limit room capacity throughout the court facility, using a radius of six feet.
- The public shall be provided access to hand washing and multiple hand sanitizer stations throughout the court facility.
- Signage to direct the public to bathrooms for hand washing and hand sanitizer stations will be strategically placed.
- Housekeeping personnel will be requested to clean and sanitize bathrooms and other areas more frequently and thoroughly to prevent transmission of COVID-19 to the extent possible.
- Restrooms will be well stocked with soap, paper towels and hand sanitizer at all times.
- Signage limiting restroom capacity shall be posted to facilitate social distancing.
- Use of water fountains shall be prohibited.
- Plexiglass shall be installed where needed to protect court employees and the public.

2.

The following safe behavioral practices **shall** be followed by all who enter the court:

- Frequently wash hands or use alcohol-based (at least 60 percent alcohol) hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- Wear a mask or other face covering. If wearing a mask would negatively impact a litigant's right to a fair hearing, the Court will consider the use of a

transparent face shield, physical distancing, or other infection control measures.

- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay at least six feet (about two arms' length) from other people.
- Stay home when sick
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, including door handles, security bins, countertops, public access computers, and seating throughout the facility.
- Court personnel shall consult with a public health or medical professional for questions or help regarding adapting these guidelines to court procedures.

3.

Notice to Public of Increased Health and Safety Measures:

- Hearing notices shall include information to include that the court has taken certain health and safety measures to limit the transmission of COVID-19.
- Dependency and all other civil hearing notices shall contain language giving the opportunity to participate by Skype for Business or other virtual medium with information about how to contact the court to participate in that manner. **See the Notice attached hereto as Exhibit A which will accompany all notices of hearings.**
- Delinquency hearing notices shall include information about how to contact the court to request a continuance in the event that the noticed party:

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 the age of 65.

Has small children but does not have childcare due to COVID-19.

- Hearing notices shall include information about how to request a reasonable and necessary accommodation in advance of arriving to court, such as an interpreter.
- Adequate signage will be posted to provide the public with instructions on how to comply with health and safety measures
- Adequate signage and floor decals will be installed to direct the flow of foot traffic throughout the court facility
- Once a witness or a party to a case has checked in, been screened and presented to the front court office, they shall provide their names and a cell phone number to which text messages may be sent to inform him or her of when their case and/or their testimony will be heard/needed. After the check-in has been completed, each such person shall return to his or her automobile and await a text message instructing him or her to return to the court facility.

4.

Providing Healthy and Safe Access to the Courtroom:

SCREENING:

The following process will be used to screen individuals for COVID-19 before entering the court building and the courtroom:

A series of questions shall be asked of each individual before or upon entry to the building, to-wit:

1. Whether or not they have traveled to or from any areas in which COVID-19 is particularly active.
2. If, within the past ten days, they have experienced symptoms of COVID-19, including: coughing; shortness of breath; difficulty breathing; fever above 100.0 degrees; chills; muscle pain; sore throat; headache, or a new loss of taste and/or smell.
3. If the person has been in contact with someone known to have COVID-19 within the last 14 days.
4. If the person has been tested for the virus and the result of such test.

5. Take the temperature of each individual seeking to enter the building with a no-contact thermometer and deny entry to anyone with a fever of 100.0 degrees or higher. Persons reporting a fever above 100.0 degrees within the past 72 hours should also be denied entry.
6. Any person denied entry for health reasons will have his or her case continued and be advised to seek medical evaluation and testing.

The following information must be collected from any person denied entry for health reasons: name, contact information, the court he or she was scheduled to attend and why, and the specific reason for denying entry.

STAGING

Individuals shall not congregate in common areas while waiting to access the courtroom.

The court has designed the following process to facilitate social distancing while individuals wait to enter the courtroom:

- Floor/sidewalk markings to keep individuals six feet apart;
- Outdoor distancing so individuals can spread out;
- Waiting in cars - Once a witness or a party to a case has initially checked in, been screened and presented themselves to the reception office of the court, they shall provide their names and a cell phone where they may be texted to let them know when their case and/or their testimony will be needed. They shall then return to their automobiles and await the text to return to the court facility.

FLOW

Control of the route that people will take through the building to access the courtroom will be set out to encourage social distancing, such as:

- Roping or taping off certain seating areas or hallways;
- Placing arrows on the floors to direct foot traffic;
- Requiring people to enter through one door and exit through another.

☒ Limiting elevator capacity to facilitate social distancing (e.g., two person maximum) and offering the stairs as an alternative route.

5.

THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES SHALL BE FOLLOWED IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY AND SAFE COURTROOM

- ☒ Individuals who do not reside together shall maintain a six foot distance in order to facilitate adequate social distancing.
- ☒ **Courtroom Capacity Shall Be Limited:**
 - Hearings shall be scheduled such that no more individuals arrive at the courtroom (including staff) than the square footage of the courtroom can accommodate to allow for social distancing. **Maximum courtroom capacity is 16 persons.**
- ☒ **Virtual hearings** in dependency and other civil cases shall continue to be held by video conference or teleconferencing whenever possible.
- ☒ **A live virtual link will be provided** to individuals who want to see what is going on in the courtroom but cannot be present due to room capacity.
- ☒ **Individuals will be rotated in and out** of the courtroom as quickly as possible to limit contact.
- ☒ **Microphones** capable of picking up audio from a safe distance will be utilized and sanitized as needed.
- ☒ **Limited contact** with shared documents and exhibits. Attorneys shall present documents and exhibits electronically if possible and appropriate.
- ☒ **Bench conferences will be held in a manner that enables adequate social distancing** (defendant/juvenile may need to waive his or her presence if necessary).

☒ **Glynn County Juvenile Court staff will stagger scheduling of hearings:**

- To maintain adequate social distancing, the court will stagger the arrival of persons participating in proceedings to ensure that a large number of individuals do not arrive at the same time.

6.

Glynn County Juvenile Court Will Promote Healthy and Safe Court Employees by:

- **The Court will implement staggered shifts** and teleworking for all court employees.
- **Employees shall not share** phones, desks, offices, surfaces or other equipment.
- **Adequate spacing** between employee work stations is provided to facilitate social distancing.
- **Employees will enter the court facility** through the back entrance.
- **Employees are required to wear face coverings** at all times when they are not in their respective offices.
- **Infrared temperature checks** of all employees shall be taken immediately upon arrival each day.
- **Employees who exhibit signs of illness** must stay home and seek immediate medical attention.
- **Courtroom employees shall be provided with face coverings** and hand sanitizing liquid.
- **Courtroom employees shall be trained** on best practices to prevent infection, including frequent hand washing for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.
- **Court offices will be cleaned** and disinfected daily or as frequently as possible.

7.

Glynn County Juvenile Court Will Institute the Following Procedures in Order to Promote Healthy and Safe Detainees:

- **Use video conferencing** for proceedings whenever possible.
- **Screen detainees and inmates** for COVID-19 symptoms before transport to/from court.
- **Work with law enforcement** to provide for proper spacing in transport vehicles and masks for inmates and detainees during transport. Stagger arrivals and departures to facilitate spacing in transportation vehicles and holding areas.
- **Sanitize transport vehicles** after use.
- **Label holding areas** to provide for social distancing.
- **Sanitize holding areas**, restraints, and other commonly used items after each use.
- **Make hand sanitizer available** to detainees.
- **Require** all inmates and detainees to wear a mask or face covering while in the court facility. If wearing a mask would negatively impact an inmate or detainee's right to a fair hearing, face shields, physical distancing, or other infection control measures shall be used.
- **Ensure** deputies who are required to be in close proximity to inmates and detainees have face coverings and gloves.