

DOUGLAS COUNTY JUVENILE COURT COVID-19 OPERATING PLAN

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges and court personnel, and any other individual entering the courthouse for business in the Juvenile Court, this Court will implement the following Operating Plan during the existence of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

GENERAL

- All judges and court personnel shall comply with the Emergency Orders issued by the Supreme Court of Georgia and Chief Superior Court Judge of Douglas County, including conducting in-person proceedings according to the guidance issued by such court and governmental directives regarding social distancing, maximum group size and other restrictions and precautions.
- All judges and court personnel will use reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.

JUDGE AND COURT STAFF HEALTH

- Juvenile Court staff who wish to telework should meet with their supervisor, the Clerk of Court, Donna Wentz.
- Juvenile Court staff shall wear masks at all times unless in their personal office that includes a door. Cubicles are not considered personal offices. Judges are not required to wear masks while on the bench and conducting hearings.
- Juvenile Court staff shall not utilize ink pens, computers or phones of any other staff member without the items first being sanitized.
- No staff shall congregate in another person's workspace unless they can maintain social distancing from each other and wear a mask.
- Juvenile Court staff shall use hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes or spray disinfectant (provided by the county) to wipe down their workstations as well as the courtroom work stations at the beginning and end of each day.
- Court personnel should regularly wash their hands and use hand sanitizer consistent with the CDC Guidelines.
- Court personnel shall ensure they practice social distancing while using the breakroom/kitchen area; sanitizing used areas before and after use.
- Juvenile Court Staff shall follow the Douglas County Courthouse guidelines as set forth by the Superior Court Order entitled Order Regarding Court Procedures Due to Covid 19 Pandemic for Douglas County Judicial Circuit.
- Juvenile Court Staff shall follow the Douglas County Covid 19 exposure protocol attached hereto as Exhibit A.

SCHEDULING OF HEARINGS

The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the courthouse and in the Juvenile Court courtrooms. Juvenile Court will follow Uniform Juvenile Court Rule 12.1 and 12.2 when conducting hearings by phone or video conference. In the event a

party is unable to participate in a video hearing, said party shall contact their attorney immediately. If they do not have an attorney, the party shall contact the Clerk's Office to make alternate arrangements for participation in the hearing.

1. ESSENTIAL HEARINGS

Essential hearings are subject to interpretation; however, some matters that fall into the essential function category are, at a minimum:

- (a) where an immediate liberty or safety concern is present requiring the attention of the court as soon as the court is available;
 - (b) juvenile court delinquency detention hearings and emergency removal matters.
- Factors that could be considered in determining if a hearing is essential are:

- Whether or not there has been a finding a probable cause finding after a preliminary hearing or waiver thereof for a child who has been removed from the home into foster care or detention
- Whether or not there has been an adjudication of delinquency for a child who remains detained after a detention hearing or a waiver thereof;
- Whether or not any party has filed a petition and/or motion requesting an immediate change in a child's custodian/guardianship circumstances.

As to *essential hearings*, the same shall be scheduled under the normal rules existing in the provisions of Title 15 of Chapter 11 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated except that, at the court's discretion, said hearings may be held via videoconferencing so long as said hearing(s) comport with due process of law.

2. NON-ESSENTIAL HEARINGS

- (a) Non-essential hearings shall be scheduled using the timelines established by the provisions of Title 15, Chapter 11 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated and the tolling periods in the Judicial Emergency Orders AND SHOULD BE SCHEDULED AS REMOTE VIDEO HEARINGS when practical to do so.
- (b) A "calendar call" may be conducted by the Court and further direction given as to times assigned per case OR the Clerk of court or such other designated court personnel member shall assign specific times assigned to each case and notify all attorneys, CASA, probation and pro se litigants. Attorneys shall provide all video conference information to their clients and witnesses.
- (c) If any litigant does not have access to the technology necessary to participate in a video conference, the court should direct the pro se litigant or their attorney to contact the assigned clerk and alternate arrangements should be made to allow the litigant to participate in the hearing. If necessary that a continuance be granted to effectuate alternative arrangements, the court should grant such a continuance for good cause shown.

- (d) Each court should develop and provide written instructions to each attorney and/or pro se litigant on how videoconference hearings will be conducted along with the virtual location of said hearing.

3. DELINQUENCY and CHINS ADJUDICATION HEARINGS and CONTEMPT MATTERS

- a. All delinquency and CHINS adjudication hearings and contempt matters shall be held in-person unless said requirement is waived by the parties.
 - b. In each case where a delinquency or CHINS adjudication hearing or a contempt matter is required, the court should inquire of the parties whether they are amenable to conducting a videoconference hearing. If the parties do not desire to do so, the court may, at the court's discretion, enter an order in any individual case requiring the time requirements set forth under the normal rules existing in the provisions of Title 15 of Chapter 11 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated to be instituted and thereafter schedule an in-person hearing following the guidelines and directives set forth herein OR the court may continue the matter until after the Judicial Emergency Order terminates.
- 4. The Court shall ensure that the public has access to view all hearings that are open to the public pursuant to O.C.G.A. 15-11-700. Should said access be restricted to internet access only, the Court shall adhere to the notice and procedure requirements set forth in Amended Uniform Court Rules 12.2 (e)(4). The courtroom doors shall remain unlocked when court is in session.
 - 5. Recording of hearings – Regardless of the method of hearing, Uniform Juvenile Court Rule 13 shall apply.
 - 6. Uniform Juvenile Court Rule 12.2 shall be followed when conducting video conference hearings. Courts shall ensure confidential attorney-client communication is possible so that clients and attorneys have a private means of communications when in different locations.

VULNERABLE PERSONS

- 1. "Vulnerable Persons" are defined as individuals who are over age 65 and individuals with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy are considered to be vulnerable persons.
- 2. The Court and/or Clerks should include information with notices and/or other communications notifying individuals who are "vulnerable persons" of the ability to contact the court to identify themselves as a vulnerable individual and receive accommodations. A notice with this information should also be posted in conspicuous locations around the court building.

3. Every effort should be made to eliminate the need for vulnerable persons to attend court in person. Should the court be unable to make such accommodations, vulnerable persons who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by being provided masks if they do not have their own and by additional efforts to ensure that their exposure to communicable diseases is reduced to the greatest extent possible. If necessary that a continuance be granted to effectuate such accommodations, the court should grant such a continuance for good cause shown.

COURTROOM PROCEDURES

- All persons not from the same household who are permitted in the courthouse will be required to wear a mask and maintain social distancing.
- Juvenile office non-court common areas shall be closed to group gatherings. The Juvenile Court Reading Room will be closed until further notice.
- Traditional seating assignments in courtrooms will be altered so that social distancing shall occur. Signs are in place in the courtrooms to show seating assignments. Court personnel may be limited due to social distancing guidelines.
- In the event more than the maximum number of people allowed per courtroom are required to be present for a hearing, Juvenile Court will contact the Superior Court's Court Administration Office to reserve a larger courtroom so that appropriate social distancing can occur.

HYGIENE

- Hand sanitizer stations are available in the public areas of the courthouse and have been provided by the Douglas County Board of Commissioners through Building Maintenance.
- Tissue boxes will be available in the courtroom upon request.

SCREENING

- The Douglas County Sheriff's Office is screening the public as they request entry into the courthouse. For specific screening measures, refer to the Order regarding court procedures due to Covid 19 Pandemic for Douglas County Judicial Circuit. Facial Coverings are required for entry into the courthouse and while conducting business in the courthouse.

CLEANING/DISINFECTING

- The County shall ensure that courthouse cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the courthouse including the Juvenile Court areas. Areas such as door handles and handrails will be wiped down several times throughout the day. In addition, courtrooms shall be disinfected by night cleaning staff after any day the courtroom is in use and non-judicial personnel have been present in the courtroom. Court staff will notify the Judicial Assistant to make the appropriate request for this procedure.



Douglas County COVID-19 Exposure Protocol
July 15, 2020

SUPERVISOR ACTIONS FOR AN EMPLOYEE WITH COVID -19 POSITIVE TEST (all positive tests are required to be confirmed by Cobb & Douglas Public Health or a positive lab form for a viral COVID-19 test)

1. Speak with employee

- Sympathize
- Encourage
- Document
 - a. When was diagnosis? (Ask for a copy of the lab report form)
 - b. When did symptoms develop?
 - c. When was employee's last day in office?
 - d. Identify where employee was and what they were doing – identify equipment/areas to be cleaned – include time 48 hours prior to diagnosis
 - e. With whom did employee have “close contact?” (to be documented using the Close Contact List – [link here](#)) **NOTE: Close Contact as defined by the CDC - being within 6 feet of the person who tested positive for COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes or direct exposure (e.g., used eating utensils from infected person).**

- Contact Mr. Frederick Perry, HR Director and Cobb & Douglas Public Health to confirm the positive test. Place employee on Emergency Administrative Sick Leave once approved by HR.

2. Inform chain of command of exposure and current status.

3. Confirm who worked on same dates/times as employee and determine who worked in “close contact” with employee, as defined above and coordinate with HR.

4. HR will notify employees who had close contact that they may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 with a **High Risk Exposure** letter, and send them home to quarantine for 14 days per CDC guidance. Do not inform employees of the name of the coworker who tested positive for confidentiality purposes.

- Place employee(s) on Emergency Administrative Sick Leave once directed by HR. Notify Cobb & Douglas Public Health of all employees who came in contact with the confirmed positive employee. Send Close Contact List to Cobb & Douglas Public Health Epidemiology Department
- Employees may be contacted by public health contact tracers. If caller ID shows public health they need to answer the phone if at all possible.

5. As soon as possible, have the relevant work spaces thoroughly cleaned by Building Services, Property Management or other designated staff.

6. Determine work reassignments.

7. To reduce rumors, HR will inform other relevant employees of the situation by providing each employee with a **Low Risk Exposure** letter provided by Cobb & Douglas Public Health. Those employees identified at Low Risk, do not need to do anything different than current practices for all employees: Watch your Distance, Wear your Mask, Wash your Hands.

Return to Work Guidance After COVID-19 Illness or Exposure for Persons Who Are Not Healthcare Personnel

June 13, 2020

The following guidance should be used to make decisions about “return to work” for persons who **are not Healthcare Personnel**:

- with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19;
- who have suspected COVID-19 (e.g., developed symptoms of a respiratory infection [e.g., cough, shortness of breath, fever] but did not get tested for COVID-19 and have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 or live in an area with local or widespread transmission;
- who have been exposed to COVID-19 without appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Return to Work Strategy

DPH recommends a time-based return to work strategy that is determined based on a person’s health status. Decisions about “return to work” for persons with confirmed or suspected COVID19 who are not healthcare personnel should be made in the context of local circumstances (community transmission, resource needs, etc.).

- Symptomatic persons who are not healthcare personnel with confirmed COVID-19 or suspected COVID-19 can return to work after:
 - At least 1 day (24 hours) has passed *since recovery* defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications AND improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); AND,
 - At least 10 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*
- Asymptomatic persons who are not healthcare personnel with confirmed COVID-19 can return to work after:
 - At least 10 days have passed since the positive laboratory test and the person remains asymptomatic. ○ Note, asymptomatic persons who test positive and later develop symptoms should follow the guidance for symptomatic persons above
- Asymptomatic persons who are not healthcare personnel, and who do not work in critical infrastructure who have a known exposure to a person with COVID-19 without appropriate PPE can return to work after:
 - After they have completed all requirements in the DPH guidance for persons exposed to COVID-19 found at <https://dph.georgia.gov/contact>
 - Of note, if this person is tested for COVID-19 during the 14 day quarantine period, a negative test result would not change or decrease the time a person is monitored.

- Asymptomatic persons who are not healthcare personnel, but who do work in critical infrastructure who have a known exposure to a person with COVID-19 can follow the CDC guidance for return to work:
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/criticalworkers/implementing-safety-practices.html>

DPH **DOES NOT** recommend using a test-based strategy for returning to work (2 negative tests at least 24 hours apart) after COVID-19 infection for non-healthcare personnel.* CDC has reported prolonged PCR positive test results without evidence of infectiousness. Although persons may have PCR-positive tests for up to 6 weeks, it remains unknown whether these PCR positive results represent the presence of infectious virus. At this time, PCR positive specimens capable of producing disease have not been isolated more than 9 days after onset of illness.

More information about the science behind the symptom-based return to work can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/strategy-discontinue-isolation.html>

Return to Work Practices and Work Restrictions

Persons who are not healthcare personnel who complete the above conditions and can return to work should:

- Wear a face covering if social distancing cannot be maintained in the workplace, per current CDC guidelines: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-gettingsick/cloth-face-cover.html>. Note: A facemask, instead of a cloth face covering, should be used by healthcare providers only. Cloth face coverings are appropriate for persons who are not healthcare personnel and are recommended by CDC to help prevent asymptomatic spread of COVID-19 in settings where social distancing cannot be practiced.
- Adhere to hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette in [CDC's interim infection control guidance](#) (e.g., cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, dispose of tissues in waste receptacles)
- Self-monitor for symptoms and seek re-evaluation from occupational health if respiratory symptoms recur or worsen.

CDC guidance for discontinuation of home isolation for persons with COVID-19 infection not in a healthcare setting can be used in conjunction with this guidance for returning to work and can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>

** Completing a test-based strategy is contingent upon the availability of ample testing supplies, laboratory capacity, and convenient access to testing and requires two samples taken at least 24 hours apart. If an employer requires the test-based strategy for return (which is discouraged by DPH), this should be done by a private physician through a commercial lab. The test-based strategy is not fulfilled by a single test, nor should it be used for screening of all persons returning to work.*