

**IN THE MUNICIPAL COURT OF COHUTTA
STATE OF GEORGIA**

ORDER IMPUTING GUIDELINES FOR IN PERSON COURT PROCEEDINGS

On April 7, 2020, in compliance with the Governor's determination that a Public Health State of Emergency then existed in the State of Georgia due to the spread of COVID-19, this Court issued an order suspending the operation of the Municipal Court of Cohutta until June 1, 2020.

On May 12, 2020, in compliance with the Supreme Court of Georgia's second Order Extending Declaration of Statewide Judicial Emergency, this Court issued an Order Reopening Court Proceedings with Limitations to be effective on June 1, 2020. In view of mounting evidence that there has been an increase of COVID-19 infections in our community, including recent infections of courthouse personnel in Whitfield County, and in order to protect members of the public required to appear in Municipal Court via summons or subpoena, as well as courthouse personnel, the Court does hereby amend its prior order to include the following:

The Court hereby implements the following procedures pursuant to the Council of Municipal Court Judges Best Practices & Guidelines for Operating Municipal Courts During the COVID-19 Recovery:

Personnel/Staff

- Implement staggered shifts for all possible workers and/or implement teleworking for all possible workers;
- Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment;
- Where possible, stagger workstations to avoid employees standing adjacent to one another or next to each other. Where six (6) feet of separation is not possible, consider spacing options that include other mitigation efforts with increased frequency of cleaning and sanitizing surfaces;
- Require all employees to wear face coverings at all times;
- Consider temperature checks of employees upon entering work each day; and
- Require workers who exhibit signs of illness to not report to work or to seek medical attention.

Notification

The standard notification for hearings for defendants and other witnesses and necessary parties will need to be modified. At a minimum, in addition to the standard information regarding date, time, and location of the hearing, include information about how to contact the Court to request an automatic 30-60 day continuance in the event that the noticed party:

- is a member of an immune-compromised population (or living in a household with someone who is immune-compromised);
- if they are over 65; and
- if they have small children and do not have child care.

Courtroom Management

In order to comply with social distancing requirements recommended by the CDC, the following are immediately **ORDERED** to be in place:

- All persons in the courthouse shall maintain a six (6) foot distance between individuals who do not reside together;
- All persons in the courthouse shall wear face coverings at all times;
- Only eight (8) persons, not including courthouse staff, shall be allowed in the courthouse at one time. When one person concludes their business with the court and leaves, another person may be let into the courthouse;
- Handwashing or hand sanitizing stations shall be available to both staff and the public, including the following:
 - Directions to the sinks in the bathroom;
 - Separate sanitation stations;
 - Frequently placed hand sanitizer dispensers; and
 - Sanitizing wipes for people to disinfect surfaces they must touch.
- All persons entering the courthouse shall enter through the garage/bay door and shall exit through the main entrance in the lobby. No more than two (2) persons shall be allowed in the lobby at one time, and those persons must maintain six (6) feet social distancing requirements while wearing a facemask at all times.

Personal Protective Equipment

ALL visitors, litigants, attorneys, witnesses, and courthouse personnel who enter Cohutta Municipal Court, the common areas of the courthouse immediately adjacent to the courtroom, judge's chambers, or any other room regularly used when Municipal Court is in session, **SHALL** wear a PPE masks of paper or cloth covering their mouth and nose. The Court has a limited supply of PPE masks for use by court personnel and visitors to the courtrooms. If a person does not have access to a PPE mask, then he or she shall notify health screening personnel of such need, and a PPE mask shall be provided to them for so long as supplies last. Court reporters or interpreters who utilize a stenography or interpreting device requiring the use of a mask may remove their PPE mask while utilizing that device.

SO ORDERED this the 7 day of July, 2020.



Honorable Bryan L. Rayburn, **Judge**
Cohutta Municipal Court