

**IN THE MUNICIPAL COURT FOR THE CITY OF ASHBURN
STATE OF GEORGIA**

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STANDING ORDER FOR COURT PROCEDURES DURING JUDICIAL EMERGENCY

In accordance with the directives of the Chief Justice's Fourth Order Extending Declaration of Statewide Judicial Emergency, and in order to reasonably and safely expand our efforts to accommodate and serve the judicial needs of the citizens of our State and other states, the following guidelines shall apply for all in-person court proceedings in the Municipal Court for the City of Ashburn, Georgia. These guidelines comply with current CDC and Georgia Department of Public Health recommendations to promote and ensure public safety during this COVID-19 pandemic.

It is the policy of the Court that hearings and other court proceedings, when scheduled, shall be held via telephonic or video conferencing whenever possible during the COVID-19 pandemic and that parties and counsel before the Court should cooperate in implementing this policy and pursue all appropriate alternatives to in-person proceedings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For all matters in which all possible alternatives have been exhausted and circumstances exist that require in-person hearings, the following guidelines are implemented:

Guiding Principles:

- 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.

Accordingly, **IT IS SO ORDERED:**

1. Specific Hearing Times: To control the number of persons in the courtroom and hearing rooms at any one time, each hearing will be scheduled to commence, and end, at specific times exclusive of any other scheduled hearings. All persons shall remain outside the court facility until fifteen (15) minutes prior to the appointed time for the commencement of their hearing. The above provisions may be more specifically provided for or altered by the Judge as to the number of persons attending any particular court proceeding and the staggering of times of arrival and hearings held during the day of court as deemed appropriate for public health and safety.

2. Prior Screening: Before entry to any courtroom, all persons, including security and court staff, must have their temperatures taken and answer screening questions. Any person presenting a fever of 100.0 degrees or higher, showing symptoms of a respiratory infection, or whose responses to screening questions exhibit potential exposure to COVID-19 will not be permitted entry. Persons who answer "Yes" to any of the following may be denied entrance to the courtroom:

- Whether or not they have traveled to or from any areas in which COVID-19 is particularly active.
- If they have, within the past ten days, experienced symptoms of COVID-19 including: cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever of 100.0 degrees or higher, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, headache, or new loss of taste or smell.
- If they have been in contact with someone known to have COVID-19 within the last 14 days.
- If they have a fever of 100.0 degrees or higher or who have reported a fever of 100.0 degrees or higher in the past 72 hours.

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If an individual with a scheduled court date is prohibited from entering the courtroom for any of the above reasons, the Chief Security Officer at the time shall contact the court for which attendance is mandated and inform the court that the individual is unable to attend due to screening criteria or other permitted cause. The person who is prohibited from entry should refer to the information posted at the courtroom or courthouse entrance and contact the court to request further instructions regarding future court attendance.

If an individual with a scheduled court date has other health limitations which make them especially vulnerable to COVID-19 or have other concerns with entering the courtroom, he or she should contact the court to request that their case be rescheduled.

3. Personal Protective Equipment: All persons admitted into the courtroom will be required to have with them and wear protective masks and gloves at all times. Any person unable to provide their own masks and gloves shall so inform the office that scheduled the hearing to see if ones may be provided by the court. Protective barriers screens shall be provided to provide additional protection to court officials, court personnel, and parties to a case.

4. Social Distancing: Upon entrance to court facilities, a minimum distance of six (6) feet between persons who do not live in the same household is required. The number of persons allowed in the courtroom at any one time will be limited in accordance with current CDC and public health guidelines. Persons will be required to sit in designated areas. All witnesses must remain outside the court facility until instructed by a court official. Handling of paperwork will be kept to a minimum.

5. Sanitation: All persons are encouraged to use sanitizer upon entering and leaving any court facility. Court staff will make every effort to clean all hard contact surfaces between hearings per recommended guidance. All staff and the public are encouraged to follow best practices to prevent infection, including frequent hand washing for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.

NOTICE

Those who consider themselves high-risk or who have been diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19:

Persons who have been diagnosed with COVID-19, or exposed to COVID-19 within the past 14 days, or meeting the criteria of a high-risk individual, should not attempt to appear in court, but should contact the court prior to your hearing to work out alternative accommodations. To find out if you are considered “high-risk” please visit the following website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>

For more information on COVID-19 you are encouraged to visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nvoc/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

SO ORDERED, this 20th day of July, 2020.



RAY HOLLAND, JUDGE
MUNICIPAL COURT
FOR THE CITY OF ASHBURN, GEORGIA