

The City of Oxford Municipal Court Reopening Guide

Introduction:

Based on public health and safety guidelines provided by the Council of Municipal Court Judges and the Georgia Court Reopening Guide, the City of Oxford Municipal Court is implementing mandatory safety requirements for court. These requirements will remain in effect until the public health emergency caused by the spread of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is rescinded and the illness is no longer deemed a threat to public safety. These measures were developed in consultation with the city's Solicitor, Judge, and Police Chief.

The goal of this guide is to list the measures that will be implemented by the city to ensure that all participants (including the staff) can handle their judicial matter safely and efficiently. The safety measures are listed by categories and include action items related to infection control, safe access to the courtroom, public notice, and other topics. The guide also includes a copy of a sample letter sent to each court participant explaining the city's new policies and a diagram displaying how participants will move through the courtroom.

Background on the City of Oxford Municipal Court:

The City of Oxford holds municipal court once a month in the Community Room at City Hall. The Court Clerk prepares the docket, calculates the fines, and attends the monthly court session. On average, the docket numbers around 40 defendants. The Court Clerk works closely with the city's Solicitor, Judge, and Police Chief to ensure that the court sessions run effectively.

General Infection Control Measures:

- All sick individuals will be asked to stay home. They may call City Hall ahead of time to reschedule their court date.
- Court security will be using thermometers to ensure that visitors with temperatures of 100.4 or greater are not allowed in the courtroom.
- All visitors and court staff will be seated or standing at least six (6) feet apart in the courtroom. With social distancing requirements, the courtroom's seating capacity is 18. Moving the chairs inside the courtroom is prohibited.
- Every person entering the building will be required to wear a mask including court staff. Masks will be provided for those who do not have one. If an individual refuses to wear a mask, the court staff will schedule a meeting via teleconference with the Solicitor.
- Every person entering the building will be required to use hand sanitizer provided by the court. Touchless hand sanitizer stations are available in the hallway between the two bathrooms and in the lobby of City Hall (See Courtroom Diagram).
- The court will provide pens for every person. They will keep the pen after signing their court documents.

- Only one person will be allowed in either restroom at one time. The restrooms have touchless faucets, soap dispensers, and hand dryers. They will be sanitized after each use. Signage will be posted on the bathroom doors limiting the restroom capacity.
- The use of the water fountains located in the hallway between the courtroom and the lobby is prohibited. Signage to prohibit the use of the water fountains will be posted in the hallway.
- All trashcan lids in the courtroom and lobby of City Hall have been removed to limit contact from visitors.
- All frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected after each use. This includes all door handles, tables, chairs, trashcans, and countertops (the council room rostrum and service window).

Provide Public Notice of the Increased Health and Safety Measures:

- Every person on the docket will receive a letter explaining the city's temporary health and safety measures and their scheduled time to appear in court. The letter also includes information on how to reschedule your date if you are 65 years of age or older or have childcare concerns and are unable to attend court (See Sample Letter).
- Signage will be posted at the courtroom entrance explaining the health and safety measures. Additionally, the projector inside the courtroom will display a message explaining the court's health and safety guidelines (e.g. – wear a mask, stay seated in the chairs, use hand sanitizer, etc.).
- The court procedures and the health and safety information will also be posted on the city's website.

Provide Healthy and Safe Access to the Courtroom:

- Markers will be installed at least six (6) feet apart on the sidewalk leading to the courtroom entrance. A police officer will be stationed outside the courtroom to ensure that those waiting to enter are standing at least six (6) feet apart.
- Court security will ask each visitor a series of screening questions to ensure that they have not been diagnosed or recently exposed to someone with COVID-19 (See Sample Screening Form). If a visitor indicates that they have experienced symptoms of COVID-19 within the last 10 days, they will not be allowed to enter the courtroom. Court security will collect their contact information to reschedule their court date.
- In addition to the screening questions, court security will be using thermometers to ensure that visitors with temperatures of 100.4 degrees or greater are not allowed in the courtroom. If a visitor records a temperature above 100.4 degrees, court security will collect their contact information to reschedule their court date.
- Attachment 3 displays the pattern to manage foot traffic through the courtroom. The police officers will direct foot traffic as participants enter and exit the courtroom.

Maintain a Healthy and Safe Courtroom:

- We are implementing a staggered scheduling system to manage the volume of people entering and leaving the courtroom. The shifts run every half hour beginning at 9:30 AM. Each shift includes 15-18 participants.
- The chairs are positioned six (6) feet apart in the courtroom. Moving the chairs is prohibited.

- Participants waiting to enter the courtroom will be required to maintain at least a distance of at least six (6) feet. They may also wait in their car until the staff is prepared to load the next shift.
- Aside from the routine cleaning and disinfecting during the court session, the courtroom will be professionally cleaned the following day.

Healthy and Safe Jurors and Potential Jurors:

- The City of Oxford Municipal Court does not hold jury trials at City Hall.

Healthy and Safe Inmates and Detainees:

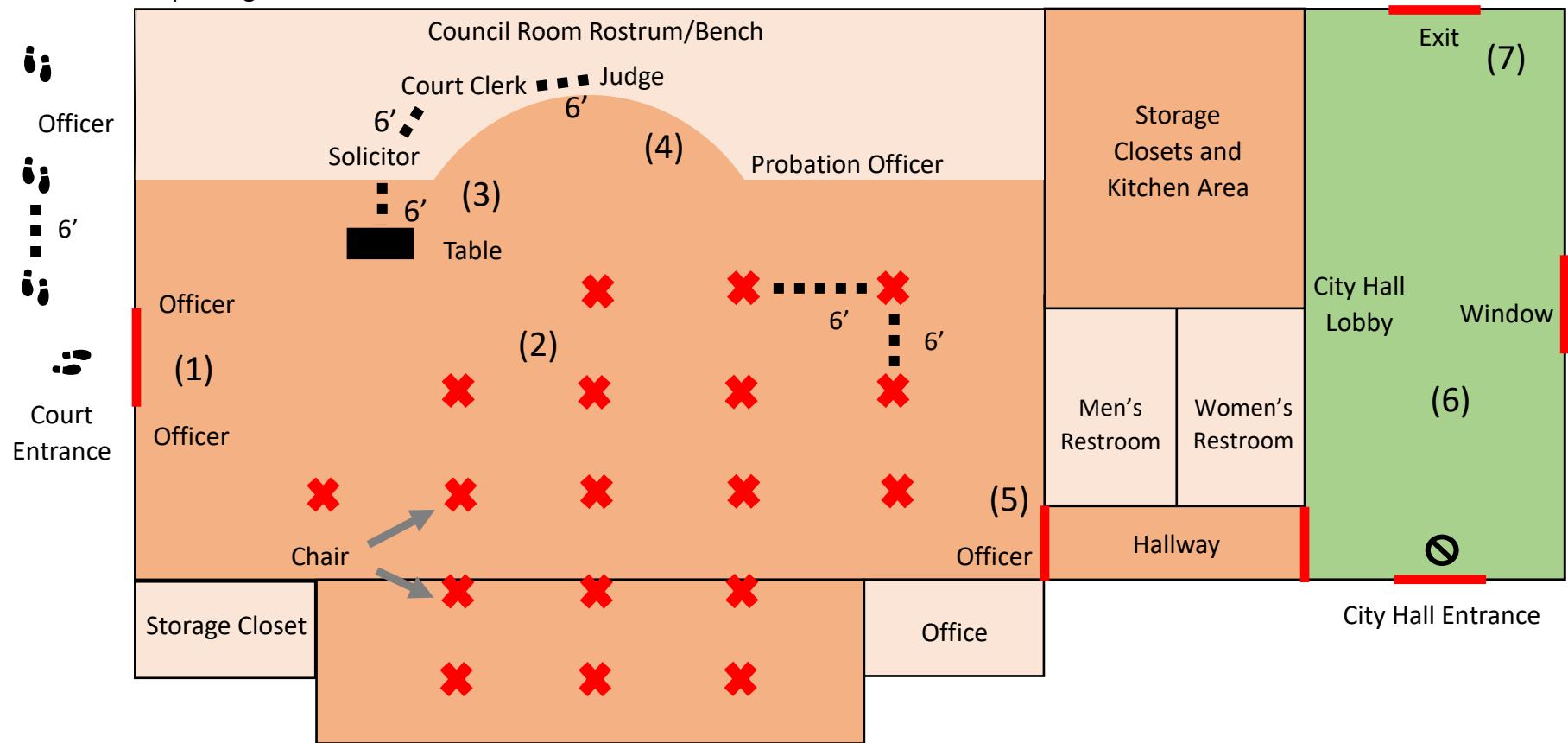
- Before transporting an inmate to court, the Police Department will perform screening procedures at the jail in consultation with the Newton County Sheriff's Office.
- All vehicles used to transport inmates to and from court will be cleaned and sanitized before and after use.
- Like all visitors, inmates are required to use hand sanitizer and wear a mask while being transported to and from the court and while inside the courtroom.
- Inmates will be seated in either the southeast corner of the courtroom or the office located near the exit (See Courtroom Diagram).

By Order of Chief Justice Harold D. Melton, Supreme Court of Georgia

Approved by Judge Steve Hathorn on July 10, 2020

Courtroom Diagram

Visitors will approach from the parking lot



Step-by-Step Guide to Courtroom Diagram

- 1) Before entering the court room, each visitor receives a temperature check. If their temperature is above 100.4 degrees, they will be asked to call City Hall to reschedule their court date. After they receive the temperature check, they will enter the courtroom and give their name, and then receive a spray of hand sanitizer and a mask (if they do not have one). The officer will find their file for the Solicitor.
- 2) The visitor will choose a seat in the courtroom.
- 3) Once the room is at capacity (18 visitors), the Solicitor will explain their rights and the process to pay their fine. The Solicitor will then call up each person one at a time and handle the case. The visitor will approach the table that is positioned at least six (6) feet from where the Solicitor will be seated.
- 4) After speaking with the Solicitor, the visitor will receive additional instructions from the Court Clerk, followed by the Probation Officer (if necessary). Individuals sitting on the rostrum will be six (6) feet apart.
- 5) The visitor will exit the courtroom through the door located in the southeast corner. An officer will be stationed at that courtroom exit to direct the visitor to the City Hall lobby.
- 6) Once the visitor enters the lobby, a staff member will direct them to the service window so they can pay their fine.
- 7) After paying the fine, the visitor will use the north exit in the lobby.

Sample Letter

110 W. Clark Street
Oxford, GA 30054
Phone 770-786-7004
Fax 770-786-2211
www.oxfordgeorgia.org



Incorporated December 23, 1839

Mayor David Eady
City Manager Matt Pepper
City Clerk Marcia Brooks

July 7, 2020

Dear Citation Holder,

Based on public health and safety guidelines provided by the Council of Municipal Court Judges and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, we are implementing mandatory safety requirements for court on July 16th, 2020. We hope you understand the following requirements are not to inconvenience you, but to ensure that everyone can handle their judicial matter safely and efficiently.

- We are implementing a staggered scheduling system to manage the volume of people entering and leaving the courtroom. Your scheduled arrival time is **9:30 AM**.
- Please do not bring children, spouses, or other family members to your scheduled hearing. If you do not have childcare, we will allow for a one-time rescheduling of your case. If you are under 21, you are allowed to bring one (1) parent or guardian with you.
- As you approach the court entrance, you will notice several markers on the ground positioned six (6) feet apart. Please stand on these markers while you wait to enter the building. We will only be allowing 24 people in the courtroom at a time. Once in the courtroom, please do not move any of the chairs. They are arranged six (6) feet apart to maintain proper social distancing.
- Court security will be using thermometers to ensure that defendants with temperatures of 100.4 or greater are not allowed in the courtroom.
- Every person entering the building will be required to wear a mask.
- Every person entering the building will be required to use hand sanitizer provided by the court.
- We ask if you are sick, please do not come to court. Please call our office ahead of time for a one-time rescheduling of your case. If you are over 65 years of age and are not comfortable coming to court, please call our office for a courtesy reschedule.

If you have any questions concerning your court date, please contact me at the phone number or email below. Please stay safe and we look forward to serving you.

Sincerely,

Dawn Stubbs, Clerk of Court
770-786-7004
dstubbs@oxfordgeorgia.org



The City of Oxford Municipal Court COVID-19 Screening Form

1. Have you, within the past ten days, experienced symptoms of COVID-19, including: cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever above 100.0 degrees, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, headache, or new loss of taste or smell?
-

2. Have you been in contact with someone known to have COVID-19 within the last 14 days?
-

3. Have been tested for COVID-19? If so, what was the result of the test?
-

If a visitor indicates that they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or they have exhibited the symptoms of COVID-19 within the last 10 days, gather their contact information below to reschedule their court date:

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Reason for Court Appearance: _____

Reason for Denied Entry: _____