

MUNICIPAL COURT OF STOCKBRIDGE
STATE OF GEORGIA

STANDING ORDER FOR COURT PROCEDURES
DURING JUDICIAL EMERGENCY

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the Fourth Order Extending Declaration of Statewide Judicial Emergency entered on July 10, 2020, by the Hon. Harold D. Melton, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Georgia, the Stockbridge Municipal Court, hereby adopts the following guidelines for in-court proceedings.

1. Purpose.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide for public access to judicial proceedings and a criminal defendant's rights to confrontation and open courtrooms, while making reasonable provision for the health and safety of all persons attending court or working in the Judicial Center.

2. Definitions.

- a. "Face mask" means a covering of the mouth and nose but not the rest of the face.
- b. "Judicial Center" means the Stockbridge Municipal Courthouse, 4602 North Henry Boulevard, Stockbridge, Georgia.
- c. "Public area" means all parts of the Judicial Center not reserved for staff.

3. Directions for those who have, have been exposed to, or are especially vulnerable to, COVID-19:

- a. Persons who have been diagnosed with COVID-19; who have been exposed to COVID-19 within 14 days; or who are experiencing fever or cough, should NOT attempt to enter the Judicial Center, but should call the telephone number provided with your court notice, or at the door, to speak with someone from the Court.
- b. Persons with other health limitations that make them especially vulnerable to COVID-19 are invited to call the telephone number provided with your court notice, or at the door, to speak with someone from the Court.

4. Admission to the Judicial Center.

All persons entering the Judicial Center SHALL:

- a. Be screened for cough, fever and recent exposure to COVID-19.
- b. Wear a face mask at all times while in the public areas of the Judicial Center (provided at the door if needed).
- c. Comply with directives of court and security personnel regarding appropriate distancing.

5. Movement within the Judicial Center.

Persons within the Judicial Center, outside of courtrooms, SHALL:

- a. Stay at least six feet from all other persons (except those with whom they are related or with whom they traveled to court), to the extent practicable, and
- b. Not board elevators with other persons except those with whom they are related or with whom they traveled to court, and
- c. Wear a face mask at all times while in the public areas of the Judicial Center, and
- d. Not congregate or loiter in the hallways in a way that obstructs other persons' access to the elevator, offices or courtroom, and
- e. Comply with directives of court and security personnel regarding appropriate distancing.

6. Admission to courtroom.

Persons entering the courtroom or waiting areas shall:

- a. Sit in one and only one designated area per room, and
- b. When notified that a room is full, follow instructions for seating elsewhere, and
- c. Wear a face mask at all times while in the courtroom or any conference room, and
- d. Comply with directives of court and security personnel regarding appropriate distancing.
- e. Due to the limited seating, persons with business before the Court are encouraged not to bring nonessential persons with them, especially children.
- f. Anyone using a pen supplied by the Court must return it as directed for cleaning.
- g. To allow for distanced seating, each person shall sit in a space marked with a tab. No one shall sit in a space not tabbed. An adjoining courtroom shall also be available for overflow seating, where spectators may observe the proceedings by live audio-video stream. Persons with cases on the calendar shall be given priority for seating in the active courtroom.
- h. Persons in the overflow seating areas shall maintain order and quiet so that everyone can see and hear the proceedings in the active courtroom.
- i. Persons who have completed their business with the Court, or who simply want to observe court, are welcome to remain and attend, but may be required to sit in an overflow seating area so that persons with business with the Court can be seated in the active courtroom.

7. Special court procedures.

Due to the ongoing judicial emergency, the Court is employing special procedures to minimize the risk to everyone's health. To the extent possible, every case that may be handled by virtual hearing will be handled in that manner. Continuances will be liberally granted. We are scheduling more court sessions, with fewer cases summoned per session; seating in the courtroom will be limited to designated seats, designed to require distancing; and distancing will be enforced in conferences with staff. Handling of paperwork will be kept to a minimum. Court personnel will sanitize areas of the courtroom between users.

8. COVID-19 Exposure.

With regard to everyone who works in a the Judicial Center, any person with known or suspected COVID-19 and/or any person with COVID-19 exposure likely to result in infection shall not be readmitted to the Judicial Center until they have been in quarantine for fourteen days. Attorneys, staff, and employees bear responsibility for informing the Court of having been exposed to COVID-19 or of having felt ill. The knowing and willful failure to do so, thereby placing others at risk, is recklessly irresponsible.

When there is reason to believe that anyone who works or has visited the Judicial Center has been exposed to COVID-19, DPH or the local health department shall be notified and notification of persons who may have been exposed shall occur as directed by DPH or the local health department.

9. Contempt of court.

The procedures outlined in this Order are necessary for the safe, efficient operation of the Court. Persons failing to observe these procedures may be attached for contempt of Court.

SO ORDERED, this 14th day of July, 2020.



Hon. Matthew M. McCord
Chief Judge, Stockbridge Municipal Court