

THE CITY OF DAWSON MUNICIPAL COURT REOPENING OPERATION PROCEDURES

CITY OF DAWSON
432 Crawford Street NE
Dawson, GA 39842
229-995-4414

IN THE MUNICIPAL COURT OF DAWSON, GEORGIA

ORDER 2020/01

DAWSON MUNICIPAL COURT REOPENING GUIDELINES

Overview

As Municipal Court reopens, certain general practices will be followed to ensure the health and safety of both court employees and the public. This COVID-19 policy and general practices are designed to meet the unique needs of the Dawson Municipal Court and its challenges of resuming operations on August 6, 2020 in the wake of the public health emergency caused by COVID-19.

Guiding Principles of the Court

- 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.

I. General Infection Control Measures

It is required that all employees and the public wear a mask or face covering when entering the Municipal Courtroom. A mask will be provided to employees and members of the public, who do not have one, seeking entry into the Municipal Courtroom.

Court staff has requested personnel clean and sanitize bathrooms and other areas more frequently and adequately to control the transmission of COVID-19.

The public will be provided with access to hand sanitizer stations inside and outside the courtroom.

Municipal Court may have a glass shield in the public section of the office and plexiglass may be installed in the Municipal Courtroom in areas that do not allow for social distancing.

Employees and the public are permitted to wear their own protective equipment, including a face covering.

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Municipal Court will strive to coordinate our efforts with other departments in the City Hall building to ensure uniform practices throughout the facility.

Municipal Court staff will isolate persons who become symptomatic while in the facility until they are able to leave and remove others from any rooms they have occupied and execute the appropriate safe hygiene practices for that space.

II. Provide Notice to the Public of Increased Health and Safety Measures

In addition to sending out rescheduling letters to defendants of their new court date and time, Municipal Court is also including a COVID-19 notice that includes the language, 'the court has taken certain health and safety measures to limit the transmission of COVID-19.'

The Municipal Court building entrance sign and check-in area sign will contain guidelines used to provide notice to the court staff if anyone has the following issues:

- Is currently infected with COVID-19 or in quarantine due to exposure to a person with COVID-19
- Is a member of an immune-compromised or medically fragile population (or living in a household with someone who is immune-compromised or medically fragile)
- Is over age 60
- Has small children but does not have child care due to COVID-19
- Needs an interpreter

Municipal Court also has signage that provides the public with instructions on how to comply with health and safety measures, as well as floor and seat markings encouraging social distancing.

III. Provide Healthy and Safe Access to the Courtroom

Screening

Dawson Municipal Court has a process to screen individuals for COVID-19 before entering the courtroom by asking a series of questions to each individual upon entry to the building. If a visitor answers yes to any of the questions, they will be denied entry. The reason will be stated on the form and their court case will be rescheduled to a later date.

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Staging

Municipal Court is committed to prevent individuals from congregating as much as possible while waiting to access the courtroom. We have designed a process to facilitate social distancing while individuals wait to enter the courtroom, sit in the courtroom.

Flow

Municipal Court has designed a flow plan to control the route that people will take through the building to access the courtroom that encourages social distancing. It includes the following:

- Upon arrival they must sign in and leave a phone number so they can be screened and be called when it is their turn.
- They will be asked to wait in their vehicle until they are called or wait in line six feet apart from each other.
- Staff notifying visitors of no more than one other person to be with them during the time they are in the courtroom.
- We will be handling one case at a time during this time.

IV. Maintain a Healthy and Safe Courtroom

Court staff and defendants will maintain 6 feet of social distancing inside the courtroom.

Court clerks and Court Law Enforcement Officers will assist in rotating visitors in and out of the courtroom as quickly as possible to limit contact.

Municipal Court staff are to sanitize the courtroom after each day's sessions as follows:

- Spray the entire court room with disinfectant spray (includes workstation and equipment)
- Wipe down chair handles, keyboards, pens, pencils, stylus, door handles and any other surfaces prone to touch
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using disinfectant spray or wipes including the seating areas

Staggering Scheduling

Municipal Court will have no more than twenty-six (26) defendants at a time in the Courtroom.

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V. Healthy and Safe Court Employees

Employees should notify their supervisor immediately and stay home if they are sick. In addition to all the normal things you do to stay healthy, the preventive measures are the same as for the flu or other viruses, according to CDC:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect your office and frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe daily.
- When in contact with the public or while working with other staff and a distance of 6 feet or more cannot be maintained, a mask shall be worn in order to decrease the possible spread of a virus.
- Per the City of Dawson HR guidelines, employees who exhibit signs of illness such as cough, sneezing, red eyes temperatures are to be checked with a no-contact thermometer.
- During court sessions and interactions with the public, court staff are to wear the following PPE: mask and/or face shield (gloves are optional).

The Police department the City of Dawson shall enforce the guidelines.

So Ordered this 6th day of August, 2020.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Willie C. Weaver, Sr.", is written over a horizontal line.

Chief Judge Willie C. Weaver, Sr.
Dawson Municipal Court

COVID-19 Plan of Action

