



## 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will remain in effect until the public health emergency caused by the spread of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is rescinded and the illness is no longer deemed a threat to public safety.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, Police Chief, and Probation Office.

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 judicial matters 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, Police Chief, and Probation Office to ensure that the court sessions are 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 lobby 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 includes information on how to reschedule a court date if the person is 65 years of age or older, or has childcare concerns, or is unable to attend court due to illness or quarantine. (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 on the screen in the front of the room 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 on the sidewalk at least six (6) feet apart 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 at or 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 a distance of at least (6) feet. They may also wait in their car until the staff is prepared to begin the next shift.
- In addition to 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).

### **Isolation and Quarantine Protocols for Court Personnel:**

The City of Oxford Municipal Court will follow the isolation and quarantine protocol for all court staff either diagnosed or exposed to COVID-19 as outlined in the Eighth Amended Administrative Order For Public Health Control Measures issued by the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH).

#### **Isolation Protocol**

If a member of the court staff tests positive for COVID-19 or reports close contact with someone who tested positive, the staff member will immediately report the exposure to the DPH. In accordance with DPH's Isolation Protocol, the staff member will also follow the guidance listed below:

- Stay home except to get medical care.
- If possible, maintain physical separation from others while in home isolation.
- Wear a face mask if you are around others in your home.
- Wash hands frequently for at least 20 seconds and use hand sanitizer frequently.
- Avoid sharing household items such as dishes, cups, towels, and bedding.
- Clean and disinfect "high-touch" surfaces frequently.
- Monitor symptoms.

\*The staff member may discontinue home isolation under the following conditions:

1. If the staff member had a mild or moderate case of COVID-19 and is not severely immunocompromised, then they may discontinue isolation when at least ten (10) days have passed since their symptoms first appeared, and at least 24 hours have passed since their last fever without the use of fever-reducing drugs, and their symptoms have improved (e.g., cough, shortness of breath.)

2. If the staff member had a severe or critical case of COVID-19 or they are severely immunocompromised, then they may discontinue isolation when at least twenty (20) days have passed since their symptoms first appeared, and at least 24 hours have passed since their last fever without the use of fever-reducing drugs, and their symptoms have improved (e.g., cough, shortness of breath.)
3. If the staff member was diagnosed with COVID-19 but never developed any symptoms (i.e., staff member was asymptomatic), then
  - a. If they are not severely immunocompromised, they may discontinue isolation when at least ten (10) days have passed since their positive laboratory test and they still show no symptoms.
  - b. If they are severely immunocompromised, they may discontinue isolation when at least twenty (20) days have passed since their positive laboratory test and they still show no symptoms.

\*The conditions to return to work under the Isolation Protocol Section are direct quotes from the DPH's Isolation Protocol (Rev. 7-28-2020) document.

### **Quarantine Protocol**

If a staff member receives notification from a healthcare provider, public health official, or isolated person that they have been exposed to COVID-19 based on close contact, they will immediately enter quarantine at home. In accordance with DPH's Quarantine Protocol, the staff member will follow the guidance listed below:

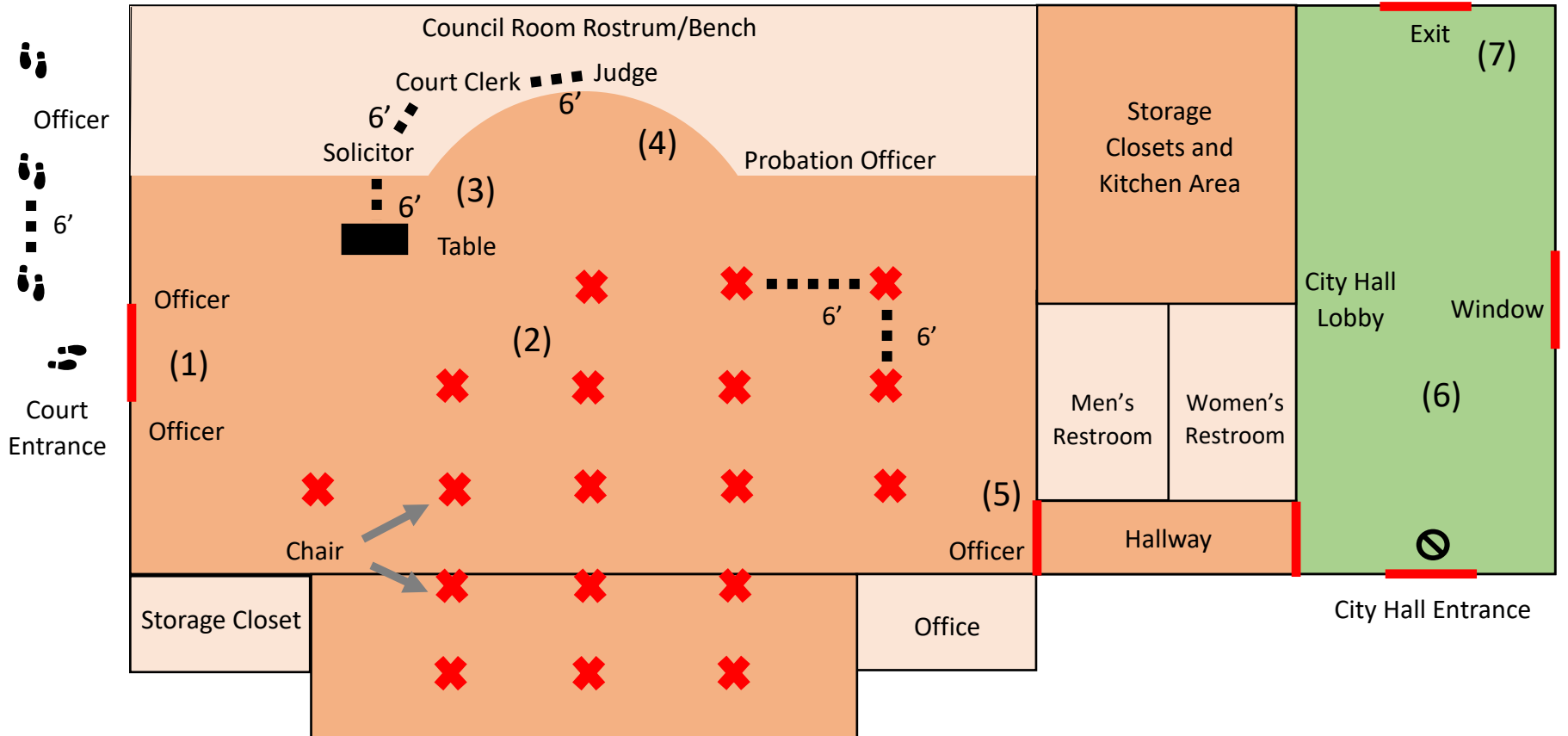
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with all persons.
- Remain in quarantine for 14 days from the staff member's last known exposure.
- Obtain a COVID-19 test.
- Monitor symptoms.

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

*Approved by Judge Steven A. Hathorn on August 19, 2020.*

# Courtroom Diagram

- Visitors will approach from the parking lot



# Step-by-Step Guide to Courtroom Diagram

- 1) Before entering the courtroom, each visitor receives a temperature check. If their temperature is at or above 100.4 degrees, they will be asked to call City Hall to reschedule their court date. If their temperature is below 100.4 degrees, 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 Court Security 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. A Court Security 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.

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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 16<sup>th</sup>, 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: fever at or above 100.4 degrees, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle pain, headache, or new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea?

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

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

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Court Appearance: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Denied Entry: \_\_\_\_\_

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