

## **SUPERIOR COURTS OF JEFF DAVIS COUNTY**

### **COVID-19 JURY TRIAL RESUMPTION PLAN**

After consultation with the local committee of judicial system participants, including the local leaders of the Georgia Department of Health (DPH), and pursuant to the Supreme Court of Georgia's Sixth Order Extending Declaration of Statewide Judicial Emergency, the Superior Court of Jeff Davis County will implement the following plan for the resumption of in-person jury trials in compliance with current public health guidance. This plan in no way supplants the Brunswick Judicial Circuit's Covid-19 Operating Plan entered May 15, 2020, but shall operate in conjunction therewith. A copy of the Covid-19 Operating Plan is attached hereto as Appendix A.

#### **Facility: Jeff Davis Courthouse**

- Jury Assembly: Both Courtroom 1 and 2 will be utilized; jurors will be summonsed in morning and afternoon panels of 50 and if necessary, spread over several days. Markers and tape will be used to delineate proper socially distanced seating in the courtroom. All jurors will be required to wear face masks or face shields. The courtrooms will be properly cleaned between panels.
- Voir Dire: Courtroom 2 will be utilized for questioning; jurors will wait in Courtroom 1 before being brought in and questioned in Courtroom 2. Jurors will be seated in both jury boxes and in the courtroom gallery for questioning. Markers and tape will be used to delineate proper socially distanced seating in the courtroom. All jurors will be required to wear face masks or face shields. The courtrooms, podiums and microphones will be properly cleaned between panels.
- Jury Trials: Courtroom 2 will be utilized for jury trials; Courtroom 1 will live stream the trial for the public to watch remotely. Markers and tape will be used to delineate proper socially distanced seating in the courtroom. All persons will be required to wear face masks or face shields. The courtrooms will be properly cleaned in between witnesses and at the end of each day.
- Jurors shall have designated parking spots and signs shall be placed throughout the parking lot and courthouse to guide jurors and ensure social distancing.

### **Notification to Potential Jurors:**

- Summonses may be issued earlier than normal to ensure that requests for hardship excusals or deferments are timely received and reviewed
- Summonses will be sent with additional notice information detailing the steps that the court has taken to ensure certain health and safety measures to limit the transmission of COVID-19, including information on cleaning procedures, face covering requirements, and social distancing protocols. A copy of the jury notice is attached hereto as Appendix B
- The notice will include information about how to contact the court to request a deferment for a COVID-19 related issue
- A written questionnaire will be included in the notice to identify individuals at increased risk for severe illness from COVID- 19, and persons with known or suspected exposure to or symptoms of COVID-19 so that they can be excused or deferred in advance without requiring them to appear at the courthouse. A copy of the Covid-19 questionnaire is attached hereto as Appendix C

### **Courtroom Space:**

- The Brunswick Judicial Circuit's Covid-19 Operating Plan entered May 15, 2020 will be utilized for the screening process of all jurors and other jury trial participants and shall be incorporated herein and followed throughout all trial proceedings
- People will be required to enter through one door and exit through another
- The courthouse, including all courtrooms and restrooms, will be sanitized prior to public admission
- Signs will be prominently displayed requiring mask and face covering, social distancing, and frequent hand washing
- Social distancing directional markers will be placed around the courthouse, at the security check-in area, in elevators, and in stairwells. The markers will encourage using the stairs as an alternative to elevators
- Elevator capacity will be limited to facilitate social distancing (e.g., two person maximum)

- Automatic hand sanitizer dispensers will be installed at courthouse entrances, near security checkpoints, and in every room where trial participants or the public will be present
- Witness will wait in rooms or designated areas where the courtroom proceedings cannot be seen or heard
- Plexiglass will be installed where necessary
- Restrooms to be used by jurors and other trial participants during breaks will be clearly designated and a limited number of people will be allowed at a time; restrooms will be sanitized after breaks and at the end of the day.
- Disinfectant products will be available in the jury room and the restroom.
- Use of water fountains shall be prohibited
- Frequently touched objects and surfaces, including door handles and elevator buttons, shall be frequently cleaned throughout the courthouse.
- Markers and tape will be used to delineate proper socially distanced seating in the courtroom
- In criminal cases, courtroom seating will be prioritized for the defendant's immediate family members, victims and their immediate family, and at least some space for members of the general public and/or media, if available. The proceedings will be livestreamed in courtroom 1 for overflow. Plexiglass barriers will be installed to separate the judge, staff, parties and their counsel, witnesses, and jurors
- Jurors will be placed in two jury boxes and proper socially distanced; if necessary, plexiglass barriers will be installed between seats and assigned juror seating
- Courtrooms will be deep cleaned with particular attention to sanitizing the jury seating area, the jury room, and party seating areas
- The public will have remote access to court proceedings via livestream in Courtroom 1 (and if necessary, the Magistrate Courtroom), in compliance with Uniform Superior Court Rule 22
- All trial participants shall sign a sign-in sheet, which may be utilized if contact tracing becomes necessary
- Witnesses shall testify behind plexiglass without masks or wear face shields rather than masks so their demeanor can be fully evaluated. The judge will ensure the jury's view of the proceedings and ability to hear is not obscured

# APPENDIX A

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Ronald M. Adams, Clerk of Court, Glynn County

## SUPERIOR COURTS OF THE BRUNSWICK JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

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CLERK'S OFFICE

### COVID-19 OPERATING PLAN

2020 MAY 15 P 4: 03

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the courthouse buildings, the Superior Courts of the Brunswick Judicial Circuit will implement the following protective measures in compliance with the CDC and GA DPH guidelines:

#### General

1. All judges will comply with the Statewide Judicial Emergency Orders issued by the Supreme Court of Georgia, including with regard to conducting in-person proceedings.
2. All judges will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely, when possible.
3. Pursuant to the Supreme Court's May 11, 2020 Judicial Emergency Order, all other courts conducting in-person proceedings within a Brunswick Judicial Circuit courthouse are strongly encouraged to adopt this Operating Plan so there is uniformity throughout the courts for all litigants and visitors. In addition, all courts are required to conspicuously post the respective courtroom capacity limits in the context of the social distancing guidelines requiring a six-foot distance maintained between all individuals not of the same household, at all times.

#### Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.4°F, or with new or worsening signs or symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, or having known close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19 will not report to work or enter the building, and should seek medical advice.
2. Each department within the courthouse will institute protective measures for all employees within that department in compliance with the CDC/GA DPH

guidelines regarding health screening the use of PPE, social distancing and sanitization.

### **Scheduling**

In order to reduce occupancy in the court building at any given time, the judges will coordinate the scheduling of nonessential in-person proceedings.

### **Vulnerable Individuals**

1. Individuals who are over age 65 and individuals of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly those not well controlled, including those who suffer from chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, serious heart conditions, immune disorders, diabetes, obesity, chronic kidney or liver disease, and those whose immune systems are compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy are considered to be vulnerable individuals.
2. Any vulnerable individual who is to appear for an in-person court proceeding may contact the office of the judge presiding over the proceeding to identify him or herself as a vulnerable individual. Vulnerable individuals who are scheduled for court will be accommodated as necessary, with said accommodations being determined by the presiding judge on a case by case basis in compliance with the current CDC/GA DPH guidelines.

### **Social Distancing**

1. All visitors to the courthouse, including attorneys and their staff, who are not from the same household will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet at all times in all areas of the courthouse.
2. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each Superior Court courtroom has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom and courtroom seating will be monitored and enforced by court staff and/or the Sheriff. For individual courtroom capacity, see Appendix A hereto.

3. In each courtroom, counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, clerk, court reporter, and bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.
4. All non-closed court proceedings shall remain open to the general public as required by law; however, all individuals visiting the courthouse as a spectator or observer not directly involved in a proceeding as an attorney, party litigant or witness, shall be directed to the jury assembly room, or other appropriate room of the courthouse, to view the proceeding electronically.

### Hygiene

Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed throughout each courthouse and in each courtroom.

### Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, Sheriff's deputies will ask the individuals if they are feeling feverish; have a cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing; or have been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions will be refused admittance to the courthouse. Each visitor's name and contact information will be collected in the event there is an outbreak and contact tracing needs to be executed. This information will be maintained by security and not available for public dissemination. **All visitors have an affirmative duty to truthfully disclose this information to court personnel.**
2. When individuals attempt to enter the courthouse, Sheriff's deputies will use a thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.4°F will be refused admittance to the courthouse.
3. Inmates being transported from the jail to the court building will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and have their temperature taken prior to transport. Inmates with symptoms or a temperature equal to or above 99.6°F will not be transported to the court building.
4. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including surgical masks and gloves.

**Face Coverings**


1. All visitors entering the courthouse are required to wear a face covering (surgical mask) at all times.
2. Visitors should supply their own masks. In the event a visitor does not have his or her own mask, a disposable mask will be provided **if the supply is available**.

**Cleaning**

The courthouses and each courtroom will be thoroughly cleaned according to the standards set forth by the CDC and GA DPH after each session of court.

This Operating Plan is implemented with the concurrence of all five active judges of the Brunswick Judicial Circuit and shall apply to all proceedings conducted in any county courthouse and any Superior Court courtrooms within this Circuit.

Date: 5-15-20

  
STEPHEN G. SCARLETT, SR.  
CHIEF JUDGE, SUPERIOR COURTS  
BRUNSWICK JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

THIS NOTICE SHALL BE PROMINENTLY POSTED AT ALL COURTHOUSE ENTRANCES, ON THE OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT WEBSITE OF EACH COUNTY IN THE BRUNSWICK JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, AND SHALL BE DISSEMINATED ELECTRONICALLY TO ALL LOCAL BAR MEMBERS.

# **APPENDIX A**

## **Appling County Courtroom Capacity**

**Gallery – 26**

## **Jeff Davis County Courtroom Capacity**

**Gallery - 24**

## **Wayne County Courtroom A Capacity**

**Gallery – 28**

## **Wayne County Courtroom C Capacity**

**Gallery – 22**

## **Glynn County Jury Assembly Room Capacity**

**Gallery – 36**

## **Glynn County State Court Capacity**

**Gallery – 10**

## **Camden County Jury Assembly Room Capacity**

**Gallery – 24**

## **Camden County Courtroom Capacity**

**Gallery – 18 (with added chairs)**



# APPENDIX B

## IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF JEFF DAVIS COUNTY STATE OF GEORGIA

Please find enclosed a summons for Grand Jury/Jury service. As you may know, the criminal justice system has been largely shut down since March 13, 2020 due to the COVID-19 crisis. Our Supreme Court, in an order dated September 10, 2020, has announced that Grand Juries in our state may resume so long as very specific steps are in place to ensure the safety of our citizens.

On behalf of the judges of this circuit, the clerks of this circuit, law enforcement of this circuit, the Office of the District Attorney, the victims of crime and the accused, we are grateful that you are willing to sacrifice your time to meet this civic obligation. We take your safety and physical health seriously. The following are some of the guidelines put in place that will assist in keeping you safe while serving on the Grand Jury.

- Upon receipt of your summons, please call the Jeff Davis County Clerk of Superior Court at 912-375-6615 and provide your phone number to the Clerk. This way we will be able to contact you should something change between the day you received your notice and the scheduled day of Grand Jury.
- To ensure your safety, the number of persons reporting for jury selection is reduced and reporting times are staggered. To allow for sufficient time and space to check individuals into the jury selection facility, please plan to arrive at the facility at least 30 minutes prior to your scheduled reporting time.
- As you come to the front of the courthouse, you will be met outside by bailiffs who will ask you a series of questions to ensure that you are not suffering from any symptoms of the COVID-19 virus and to determine whether you have been exposed to anyone with the COVID-19 virus. Your temperature will be taken.
- All persons entering the facility will be required to wear a face mask; or, if you have a medical reason you cannot wear a mask, you must wear a transparent face shield. If you do not have one, the county will provide one for you. Out of respect for you, the courthouse staff and those particularly involved in the Grand Jury process will be wearing masks as well.

## APPENDIX B

- The Brunswick Judicial Circuit's COVID-19 Trial Resumption Plan<sup>1</sup> will be observed and enforced at all times. This includes social distancing requirements, limiting the number of persons in the facility, hand sanitizing stations throughout the facility, and the requirement to wear a mask at all times.
- There are marked areas in the courtroom that meet the requirements as set out by the Supreme Court and the Brunswick Judicial Circuit. Please sit in the marked areas. This will allow for sufficient distance between the individual jurors.
- The courtroom will be sanitized prior to your arrival and throughout the day.

The criminal justice system cannot function without the involvement of our citizens. We need you. We recognize that there may be reasons why you believe that you cannot serve; however, the legal reasons to be excused from jury service are limited. If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact your Clerk of Court at 912-375-6615.

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<sup>1</sup> The Circuit's COVID-19 Trial Resumption Plan may be accessed online by visiting <https://georgiacourts.gov/covid-19-court-operating-guidelines>.

# APPENDIX C

## COVID-19 HEALTH SURVEY

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

JUROR # \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE # \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE ANY SIGNS/SYMPTOMS OF A RESPIRATORY INFECTION SUCH AS FEVER, COUGH, SHORTNESS OF BREATH, BODY ACHES, OR SORE THROAT?</li></ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>DO YOU HAVE A FEVER (MORE THAN 100.4 F) ?</li></ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>HAVE YOU HAD ANY SYMPTOMS OF RESPIRATORY ILLNESS (COUGH, NASAL CONGESTION) IN THE PAST 14 DAYS?</li></ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>HAVE YOU COME INTO CLOSE CONTACT (WITHIN 6 FEET) WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS A LABORATORY-CONFIRMED COVID-19 DIAGNOSIS WITHIN THE LAST 14 DAYS?</li></ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ARE YOU CURRENTLY IN QUARANTINE DUE TO EXPOSURE TO A PERSON INFECTED WITH COVID-19?</li></ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ARE YOU A MEMBER OF AN IMMUNE COMPROMISED OR MEDICALLY FRAGILE POPULATION OR DO YOU LIVE IN A HOUSEHOLD WITH SOMEONE WHO IS IMMUNE COMPROMISED OR MEDICALLY FRAGILE?</li></ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ARE YOU OVER THE AGE OF 65?</li></ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>DO YOU HAVE SMALL CHILDREN BUT DO NOT HAVE CHILDCARE DUE TO COVID-19?</li></ul>		