

IN THE STATE COURT OF COWETA COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA

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COWETA COUNTY, GA
SHEILA W. ECHOLS, CLERK

GUIDELINES FOR RESUMING JURY TRIALS
IN JANUARY 2021
(Effective November 2020)

I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice Harold D. Melton's Seventh Order Extending Declaration of Statewide Judicial Emergency, from October 10, 2020, the Chief Judge of each trial court is authorized to summon new trial jurors for the purpose of conducting trials by jury. The judges of this court fully understand that jury duty is a calling of the highest nature. Our entire judicial system depends on the participation of dedicated community members for this purpose. It is the intent of these guidelines to ensure all potential jurors that the court has imposed and will enforce the necessary measures and protocol to protect the health and well being of all court participants. Therefore, the court attached as Appendix A "Guidelines for Holding Court", which applies to all individuals entering the Coweta County Justice Center. These "Guidelines" were adopted and published by this court in May of this year and were submitted to the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) as required by Justice Melton. The guidelines are available on the Coweta County website. (www.coweta.ga.us)

Pursuant to Chief Justice Melton's aforementioned Order, the Chief Judge of the trial court shall provide sufficient notice to the Clerk of Superior Court to allow potential jurors to be summoned. Furthermore, potential jurors shall be informed in advance about the court's safety precautions. Additionally, the Guidelines will be submitted to the AOC and to the Coweta Judicial Circuit's Chief Superior Court Judge.

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II. JUROR PROCEDURE

The Chief Judge of the State Court of Coweta County Georgia implemented the following measures to accommodate and protect potential jurors:


- Dissemination of a COVID-19 safety precaution notice as well as instructions explaining the mobile check-in system.
- Staggered juror reporting times.
- Utilization of a web-based mobile check-in system that permits prospective jurors to remain in their vehicles in the parking lot upon the virtual registration of their attendance.
- Erection of signs and large banners inside and outside the building that display the QR (Quick Response) code that jurors use to register their presence.
- Continuation of COVID-19 screening stations that are staffed by the Coweta County Sheriff's Office personnel. COVID-19 screening includes infrared thermal temperature checks, COVID-19 questioning, and the security check point with a metal detector.
- Employment of additional court bailiffs or other court personnel to direct screened jurors to their next location.
- Spacing chairs in all rooms occupied by jurors at least six feet apart in every direction.
- Requiring all persons entering the building to wear masks at all times.
- Utilizing stairways to travel between floors as the preferred method. Limiting occupation of the elevators to a maximum of two individuals at a time.

III. VOIR DIRE

1. In order to reduce the duration of voir dire, a juror questionnaire will be compiled and completed by each prospective juror prior to his/her juror summons date.
2. Each court room floor, jury box and audience benches are marked with painters tape and plastic chains to indicate where jurors, attorneys and other persons are permitted to walk, sit and stand. All markings are compliant with the six (6) feet social distancing requirements.
3. All attorneys shall conduct voir dire from the center podium which is located at least six (6) feet from all other seats, stations, tables and court personnel.
4. All attorneys shall abide by all statutory and regulatory time limits.

IV. CLEANING

- Jury deliberation rooms and jury room bathrooms will be cleaned and sanitized at the conclusion of court each day (or as often as necessary).
- Jury deliberation rooms and jury room bathrooms are equipped with disinfected wipes and/or hand sanitizer.
- Bailiff personnel has been increased to facilitate the movement of jurors in an orderly fashion and to quickly respond to any unforeseen juror concerns and/or issues.


John Herbert Cranford, Chief Judge
State Court of Coweta County