

WILCOX COUNTY PLAN FOR RESUMING JURY TRIALS

WHEREAS, the Wilcox County Committee for Resuming Jury Trials met on October 22, 2020, with the following members present: Chief Superior Court Judge Robert W. Chasteen, Jr., Probate and Magistrate Court Judge Shawn Rhodes, District Attorney Brad Rigby, Chief Public Defender Tracy Mullis, County Manager Paula Ball, Superior Court Clerk Janet Mauldin, Ed Futch with Emergency Medical Services, Wilcox EMA/Fire Director Larry Brown, Wilcox County Sheriff's Investigator Steve Mauldin, Assistant District Attorney Whitney Bradford, Assistant Public Defender Matt Maxwell, and Court Administrator Amy Bryant.

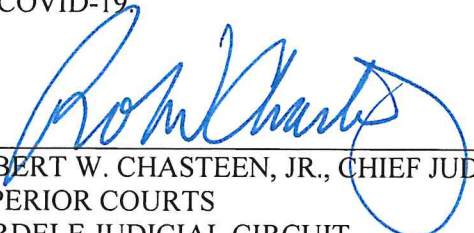
WHEREAS, the Wilcox County Committee for Resuming Jury Trials has adopted the following Wilcox County Plan for Resuming Jury Trials, hereinafter referred to as "Plan":

1. The Cordele Judicial Circuit's COVID-19 Court Operating Guidelines (dated 9-30-20) were developed in compliance with the Judicial COVID-19 Task Force Report, the Georgia Court Reopening Guide, and other public health and safety guidelines and includes sanitization procedures, face-covering requirements, and social distancing protocols. The Cordele Judicial Circuit COVID-19 Court Operating Guidelines are published on the Eighth Judicial District's website, the Judicial Council/AOC website, and on the doors to the circuit's courthouses. The guidelines are attached as an exhibit to this Plan and incorporated herein as "Exhibit A."
2. Along with their juror summons, jurors will receive a letter describing protective measures taken in the Wilcox County Courthouse for their health and safety. The letter is attached to this Plan and incorporated herein as "Exhibit B." Upon receipt of a summons, a juror will call the Clerk's office to answer questions regarding his or her possible exposure to COVID-19.
3. Jurors will arrive at a hand sanitizing station at the courthouse entrance. Hand sanitizer and/or sanitizing stations will be available throughout the building for use by jurors, trial participants, and members of the public, including, but not limited to the front entrance, all restrooms, the jury deliberation rooms, the courtrooms, and the jury assembly room. Sanitizer will be available on counsel's tables in the courtroom. Sanitizer will be available at the lectern and the witness stand.
4. Jurors will be screened upon arrival and before entry into the courthouse. Their temperatures will be taken with a contactless thermometer. Anyone with a temperature over 100.4° will not be admitted into the building. Prospective jurors will answer questions on a screening form. Anyone who answers in the affirmative to having COVID-19 or known exposure to COVID-19 pursuant to the screening form will not be admitted. The Wilcox County Sheriff's Office will provide to the Wilcox County Clerk's Office a list of people who were not admitted due to possible exposure to COVID-19.
5. All persons entering the building will wear masks or face coverings. Masks or other face coverings must be worn in the courthouse at all times except when directed by the Court for case-specific reasons or by security personnel. If a person does not have a mask, one will be provided to him or her.
6. All common areas inside the courthouse will be marked with blue tape to show where people should stand or sit to observe social distancing guidelines and maintain a distance of 6 feet.

The chairs in the gallery will be spaced six feet apart. The chairs in the jury box will be marked with blue tape to provide for social distancing.

7. Jurors will be summoned in small groups to allow for social distancing. The arrival times will be staggered to ensure that social distancing requirements are maintained.
8. Jury selection will be conducted in the courtroom. Seating is limited to comply with social distancing requirements; thus, additional chairs will be moved to the jury box area so that the jurors can sit 6 feet apart. No more than 12 jurors will be questioned at a time. After the jury is seated, the jurors will be instructed to sit in the same chair for the duration of the trial.
9. During the trial, if there is inadequate seating in the courtroom, any members of the public will be seated in an alternate site where a live feed of the proceedings will be broadcast. Courtroom seating will be prioritized for the defendant's immediate family members and victims and their immediate family members. Counsel for the State and the defendant will be responsible for informing the Court and the bailiffs of the number of seats needed for victims and family members of victims and the defendant.
10. During the trial, witnesses will sit behind a plexiglass barrier.
11. Trial exhibits will be published to the jury using digital monitors whenever possible. Digital exhibits will be used where feasible to reduce the handling of paper or physical evidence in the courtroom. If jurors need to touch or handle any trial exhibits in the courtroom or during deliberations, disposable gloves and hand sanitizer will be provided.
12. All courtrooms, the jury assembly room, witness rooms, juror deliberation rooms, common areas, and restrooms will be sanitized daily.
13. The office of the presiding judge will alert stakeholders when courthouse personnel or any visitors to the courthouse have tested positive for COVID-19.

SO ORDERED, this 3 day of November, 2020.


ROBERT W. CHASTEEN, JR., CHIEF JUDGE
SUPERIOR COURTS
CORDELE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT