

# IN THE OGLETHORPE COUNTY MAGISTRATE COURT STATE OF GEORGIA

## COVID-19 STANDING ORDER

The purpose of this Standing Order is to 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, and to begin the process of normalizing the operations of the Magistrate Court.

### Public admission and screening:

In order to protect the health of litigants, lawyers, judges, court personnel and the public the following will apply:

- Anyone entering the offices of the Oglethorpe County Magistrate Court **MUST** wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth. If you are unable to procure a mask the court will provide you with one.
- Hand sanitizer is available at the front lobby counter for everyone to use.
- Hearings will be conducted in a courtroom where there is a glass partition between the Judge-Court personnel and litigants-lawyers.
- Individuals entering inside the offices of the court will have their temperature taken by the security officer and/or the clerk with an infrared forehead thermometer. If a fever/temperature of 100.0 degrees or higher is detected, the hearing or reason for court will be continued.
- Individuals who wish to enter the court will be asked the following questions. If an individual answer yes to any of the questions their admittance will be denied.
  1. Have you traveled to or from any areas beyond the borders of the United States with the past 30 days?
  2. Have you experienced symptoms of Covid-19 such as cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fever above 100.0 degrees, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, headache or loss of taste or smell within the last fourteen (14) days?
  3. Have you been in contact with someone known to have Covid-19 or have symptoms similar to Covid-19 within the last fourteen (14) days?
  4. Have you had or been around someone that has had a fever of 100.00 degrees or higher in the pasted 72 hours?

If an individual has a scheduled court date and is prohibited for any of the above reasons, the court will reschedule the case/hearing until the next term of court.

- Everyone in the courtroom and public areas should comply with social distancing recommendations and keep six (6) foot distance from other persons as much as possible.
- If an individual with a scheduled court date has other limitations such as age or health, which would make them more vulnerable to Covid-19 or have other concerns with entering the courtroom, should contact the court immediately to request that their case be rescheduled or be done virtually (when possible).

- Individuals are strongly encouraged to leave any unnecessary belongs in their vehicle or at home in order to minimize surfaces for possible exposure.
- Persons entering the courtroom must comply with the directions given by the staff with respect to seating and social distancing. The court shall determine the capacity in its sole discretion.

### **Cleaning and Disinfecting:**

- All efforts will be made to have court and/or county personnel clean and disinfect areas of the courtroom between users per recommended guidance. All staff and the public are encouraged to follow best practices to prevent infection, including frequent hand washing for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. Hand sanitizer will be available on the table in the courtroom and in the lobby.

### **Virtual Court Proceedings:**

- Judges of the Magistrate Court will continue to use technology to provide an alternative to in-person proceedings for the issuance of criminal arrest warrants and bond hearings. (Virtual hearings may be available for civil cases upon request in writing to the court.)

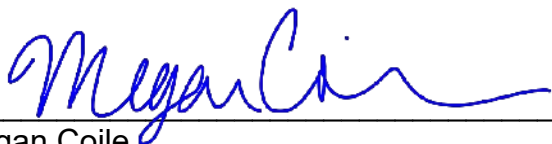
### **Inherent Power:**

- Nothing in this proposed plan shall be construed to limit the Inherent Power of the court. Each assigned Judge may direct and control their respective cases and those persons before them in their courtroom as they deem necessary for the Administration of Justice. This order shall be in effect until further modification, extension or termination. This order is applicable to the operation and conduct of the Magistrate Court.

### **Public Notice:**

- A copy of this Standing Order shall be available at the Clerk's desk, in the lobby of the Magistrate Court and posted on the Oglethorpe County Magistrate Court website (<https://www.oglethorpecountyga.gov/magistrate>). A copy of the Standing Order will also be sent to the Clerk of the Supreme Court and the Administrative Office of the Courts.

**SO ORDERED**, this 1<sup>st</sup> day of January, 2021.



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Megan Coile  
Chief Magistrate Judge-Court  
Oglethorpe County, Georgia