

STATE COURT OF RICHMOND COUNTY  
STATE OF GEORGIA

**STANDING ORDER FOR COURT PROCEDURES  
DURING JUDICIAL EMERGENCY**

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the Third Order Extending Declaration of Statewide Judicial Emergency entered on June 12, 2020, by the Hon. Harold D. Melton, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Georgia, the *Georgia Court Reopening Guide*<sup>1</sup> the State Court of Richmond County, hereby adopts the following guidelines for in-court proceedings.

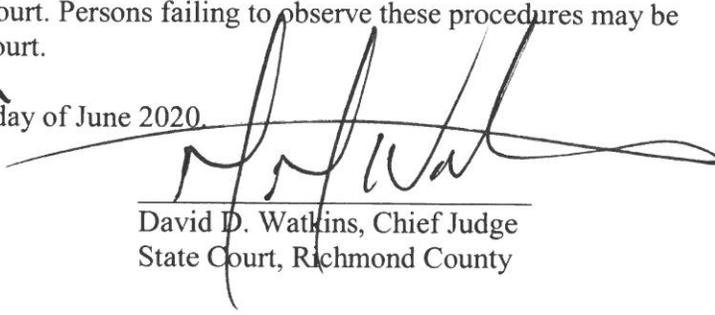
1. **Purpose.** The purpose of this Standing Order is to provide for public access to judicial proceedings; ensure each defendant/litigant receives a fair hearing as required by law; and make reasonable provisions for the health and safety of all persons attending court or working in the Judicial Center.
2. **Definitions.**
  - a. “Face mask” means a covering of the mouth and nose but not the rest of the face.
  - b. “Judicial Center” means the Augusta-Richmond County Judicial Center John H. Ruffin, Jr. Courthouse, 735 James Brown Blvd., Suite 4103, Augusta, Georgia, 30901.
  - c. “Public area” means all parts of the Judicial Center not reserved for staff.
3. **Directions for those who have, have been exposed to, or are especially vulnerable to, COVID-19.**
  - a. Persons who have been diagnosed with COVID-19; who have been exposed to COVID-19 within 14 days; or who are experiencing fever or cough, should NOT attempt to enter the Judicial Center, but should call the telephone number provided with your court notice, speak with security personnel, or ask to speak with someone from the Court.
  - b. Persons with other health limitations that make them especially vulnerable to COVID-19 are invited to call the telephone number provided with your court notice, speak with security personnel, or ask to speak with someone from the Court.
4. **Admission to the Judicial Center.** All persons entering the Judicial Center:
  - a. SHALL be screened for cough, fever and recent exposure to COVID-19.
  - b. Are strongly encouraged to wear a facemask at all times while in the public areas of the Judicial Center (provided at the door if needed).
  - c. SHALL comply with directives of court and security personnel regarding appropriate distancing.
5. **Movement within the Judicial Center.** Persons within the Judicial Center, outside of courtrooms:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://georgiacourts.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Georgia-Court-Reopening-Guide-FINAL.pdf>

- a. SHALL Stay at least six feet from all other persons (except those with whom they are related or with whom they traveled to court), to the extent practicable.
  - b. Are encouraged not to board elevators with other persons except those with whom they are related or with whom they traveled to court.
  - c. Are strongly encouraged to wear a facemask at all times while in the public areas of the Judicial Center.
  - d. SHALL not congregate or loiter in the hallways in a way that obstructs other persons' access to elevators, offices or courtrooms.
  - e. SHALL comply with directives of court and security personnel regarding appropriate distancing.
6. **Admission to courtrooms.** Persons entering State Court courtrooms or waiting areas SHALL:
- a. Sit in one and only one designated area per room.
  - b. When notified that a room is full, follow instructions for locating elsewhere.
  - c. Wear a face mask at all times while in the courtroom or any conference room.
  - d. Comply with directives of court and security personnel regarding appropriate distancing.
  - e. Due to the limited seating, persons with business before the Court are encouraged not to bring nonessential persons with them, especially children.
  - f. To allow for distanced seating, each person shall sit in a space so marked. No one shall sit in a space marked no sitting.
7. **Special court procedures.** Due to the ongoing judicial emergency, the Court is employing special procedures to minimize the risk to everyone's health. To this end, we are scheduling more court sessions, with fewer cases summoned per session; seating in the courtroom will be limited to designated seats, designed to require distancing; and distancing will be enforced in conferences with staff. Handling of paperwork will be kept to a minimum. Court personnel will sanitize areas of the courtroom between users.
8. **Contempt of court.** The procedures outlined in this Order are necessary for the safe, efficient operation of the Court. Persons failing to observe these procedures may be attached for contempt of Court.

SO ORDERED, this 16<sup>th</sup> day of June 2020.

  
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 David D. Watkins, Chief Judge  
 State Court, Richmond County

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 AND JUVENILE COURT  
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