

## MUNICIPAL COURT OF AUSTELL

### REOPENING GUIDELINES

JULY 2020

Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice Harold D. Melton's Fourth Order Extending Declaration of Statewide Judicial Emergency issued on July 10, 2020 requires courts to use the "Georgia Court Reopening Guide" as a template for such operating guidelines which must include all subject matters contained therein, among other requirements. Therefore, the Municipal Court of Austell ("Court") hereby adopts the following operating guidelines to supplement the mandatory guidelines issued by the Chief Superior Court Judge of the Cobb Judicial Circuit. These operating guidelines shall be modified as public health guidance is modified, and shall remain in effect until public health guidance indicates that they are no longer required.

#### 1. General Infection Control Measures

The Court will follow applicable public health guidance from the CDC, DPH, and Cobb & Douglas Public Health. The Court will comply with COVID-19 procedures, protocols, and policies developed and implemented by Cobb County government. The Court shall continue to coordinate public health efforts with other courts in the Cobb Judicial Circuit.

Employees and the public are required to wear a mask or face covering when entering the courthouse. Masks have been provided to employees. The Court maintains the discretion to allow an individual to remove his/her face covering temporarily when it is safe and necessary.

#### 2. Hearings/Pleas

The Court shall continue to deal with pleas in an open courtroom with public access whenever possible. Attorneys and parties will receive a notice with instructions for these hearings. All procedures will be utilized to minimize the handling and passing of paper between counsel, the parties and Court staff.

Areas of the Courtroom are currently taped to minimize contact between the parties, counsel and court staff. Please be mindful of these taped areas. Also, because Court matters are very brief, all seating has been removed from the Courtroom. Seats can be provided if needed. No more than 10 persons will be in the courtroom at any time and they will be instructed to stand in a taped area to remain socially distant.

If a defendant, attorney or witness has a fever or symptoms of COVID-19 and have an upcoming hearing, please contact the Clerk's office as soon as possible. Please be aware that temperatures are being taken with thermal scanners upon your entry to the Courthouse.

Please enter the Courtroom as directed. You will have an opportunity to speak with the prosecutor in a separate room. Once your matter has concluded, please exit the Courthouse to protect the health of yourself and the public. Do not linger in the Courtroom, lobbies or hallways.

Hand sanitizer and public restrooms are available for the public to frequently wash and/or sanitize their hands and Courtrooms and public areas are cleaned and sanitized regularly.

#### 3. Provide Notice to the Public of Increased Health and Safety Measures

The operating guidelines applicable to the Court have been posted on-line, at the courthouse, and submitted to the Administrative Office of the Courts. To further disseminate this information, some existing court notices have been modified and supplemental notices drafted to include COVID-19 screening procedures and court contact information for those that do not meet the criteria for courthouse entry. The Court will continue to develop such modified notices as necessary. Signage and floor decals have been installed to assist in screening and maintaining social distancing.

#### 4. Provide Health and Safe Access to the Courtroom

The Court will continue to adhere to the COVID-19 courthouse entry screening procedure guidance from the CDC, DPH, and Cobb & Douglas Public Health.

#### 5. Healthy and Safe Court Employees

Court staff are working in-person at the Courthouse each day full time. Staff work and break areas have been modified as necessary to allow for better spacing and reduce sharing certain work equipment. Windows between the public and court staff in the Clerk's Office shall remain closed when possible.

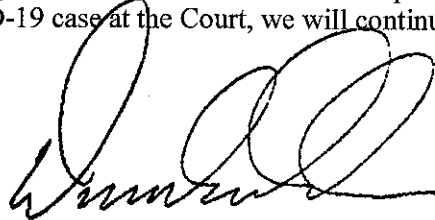
Court staff may be temperature checked each day.

Court staff have been provided hand sanitizer and masks. Court offices, work spaces, and public areas will be more frequently and deeply cleaned than before the pandemic.

Employees are frequently reminded to maintain social distancing, wear a face covering, wash their hands, and remain at home if sick or in contact with someone known or suspected to be positive for COVID-19. Court staff and judges shall be required to report such illness or contact, take a test if directed, and isolate and/or quarantine as required by the applicable DPH Administrative Order for Public Health Control Measures.

When there is reason to believe that anyone who works at or has visited the Court has been exposed to COVID-19, DPH and/or Cobb & Douglas Public Health shall be notified and notification of persons who may have been exposed shall occur as directed. This process shall occur according to policies, procedures, and/or protocols recommended by DPH and/or Cobb & Douglas Public Health. To further keep the community informed, if there is a confirmed positive COVID-19 case at the Court, we will continue to publicly release relevant, non-identifying information.

SO ORDERED, THIS 21 DAY OF JULY



JUDGE DAVID P. DARDEN  
MUNICIPAL COURT OF AUSTELL

FILE

SM Williams  
July 21, 2020