

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF UPSON COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA

TERESA MEIER, SUPERIOR COURT CLERK

**STANDING ORDER MODIFYING COURTHOUSE GUIDELINES AND
PROCEDURES RELATED TO COVID-19**

The Superior Court of Upson County, Georgia, in observation of the guidelines set forth by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") as well as the Georgia Department of Public Health ("DPH"), concerning the outbreak of coronavirus/COVID-19, and in adherence to all related Orders issued by the Georgia Supreme Court, hereby adopts the following guidelines for in-court proceedings until further notice. This Order supersedes all previous standing orders as it relates to COVID-19.

1.

This protocol shall be recorded on the minutes of the Court and made available to the public. This protocol shall be posted on the website of the Clerk of Superior Court and shall be posted in prominent places within, and at the entrance to, the courthouse. This protocol shall become effective immediately upon the signatures listed below.

2.

A sign stating instructions for any person diagnosed with COVID-19, experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or having been in close proximity to someone testing positive for COVID-19 shall be posted at all courthouse entrances and clerk's offices.

3.

Incorporating the guidance promulgated by the CDC, the Courthouse shall adopt the risk level for COVID-19, as determined by the CDC and shall apply mask mandates in accordance with the applicable risk factor.

Prior to the courthouse opening on each day of business, an individual designated by courthouse security shall determine the COVID-19 risk level, as determined by the CDC, using the following internet website: <https://cdc.gov>. That individual shall access the drop-down menu for "COVID-19 County Check." The designated individual shall then place the COVID-19 risk level at a location prominently displayed for individuals entering the courthouse. The identified community levels are: high, medium and low.

If the risk level is RED: All individuals should wear a well-fitting mask indoors, regardless of vaccination status or individual risk.

If the risk level is YELLOW: Masks should be worn by any individual who is immunocompromised or at high risk for severe illness, regardless of vaccination status. Masks are encouraged for all others.

If the risk level is GREEN: Masks should be worn based on an individual's personal preference.

4.

When masks are otherwise mandated (level red), Judges may allow speakers to remove their masks to be understood, though social distancing and plexi-glass shielding should be maintained.

5.

Any Courthouse employee testing positive for COVID-19 shall be isolated, in accordance with the CDC guidelines. Anyone with COVID-19 exposure likely to result in infection shall be quarantined in accordance with CDC guidelines.

6.

Multi-case calendars should be scheduled at staggered times, or the cases will be placed "on-call" by the Court to prevent over-crowding. The time for hearings shall be staggered as to reduce the number of persons present in the courtroom who are involved in matters other than the ongoing hearing. Should the number of persons present in any portion of the courthouse exceed that number resulting in the inability to remain safely distant from others in that room or space, the Sheriff or Judge shall request those individuals who are not essential to the hearing to move to an area outside the courthouse. Priority seating shall be given to all litigants of the ongoing hearing and their attorneys, necessary court personnel, members of the press, supporters of the litigants, and the general public, in that order. All individuals inside the courthouse and those waiting to enter the courthouse must the separation required by CDC social distancing. Distancing guidelines will vary depending on the community levels as determined by the CDC. If the community level is yellow, distancing will be 3-feet. If the community level is red, distancing will be 6-feet for all individuals regardless of vaccination or risk status.

7.

All elected officials and/or department heads shall be responsible for applying CDC guidelines. The Sheriff and Judge presiding over court shall instruct all courtroom attendees to be respectful to others and observe all social distancing recommendations by the CDC, including maintaining distance from those do not reside within the same household in accordance with the guidelines set forth herein.

8.

The Sheriff shall display, at the courthouse entrance, a sign which states that all persons seeking entry must respond to minimal, but necessary, questions concerning whether they currently have COVID-19 or certain recognizable symptoms of the disease. The Sheriff shall make those inquiries of those individuals who seek to enter through the front doors of the courthouse and shall also administer an infrared test of the temperature of each such person. Entry shall be denied according to the Center for Disease Control, (hereafter "CDC") guidelines. This will include anyone with a fever, having been exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 5 days and who is not vaccinated, or who has other symptoms such as shortness of breath, cough, chills, or

respiratory problems. When the Sheriff denies entry to an individual, the Sheriff shall inquire if said individual is a court litigant or witness, and if so, shall promptly notify the presiding Judge and Clerk.

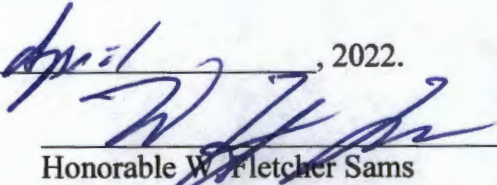
9.

Seating in the courtroom will be limited to designated seats, designed to require proper social distancing. Plexi-glass barriers shall be available for all court personnel and witnesses sitting at or near the Judge's bench in all courtrooms when risk levels are red or yellow. Hand sanitizer shall be available for all courtroom attendees. Sanitizer will be provided at each podium for the ease of sanitation between parties. Public areas shall be marked to denote and encourage the proper social distance. All public bathrooms shall have signage that encourages hand washing, when possible. Stairways shall be clearly marked for one-way traffic to encourage social distancing.

10.

These guidelines shall be distributed to all elected officials and department heads with offices in the Courthouse. The guidelines shall be recorded on the minutes of the Superior Court. The guidelines shall be made available on the website of the Clerk of Superior Court, distributed to the County Bar Association and shall be posted in prominent places within, and at the entrance to, the courthouse. When the Clerk notices all parties for hearings, the Clerk shall include an additional letter outlining these guidelines with court each notice. These guidelines shall become effective immediately upon the signatures listed hereinbelow.

Entered and effective this 21st day of April, 2022.



Honorable W. Fletcher Sams
Superior Court of Upson County
Chief Judge, Griffin Judicial Circuit