

SUPERIOR COURTS OF THE BRUNSWICK JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

COVID-19 OPERATING PLAN

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the courthouse buildings, the Superior Courts of the Brunswick Judicial Circuit will implement the following protective measures in compliance with the CDC and GA DPH guidelines:

General

1. All judges will comply with the Statewide Judicial Emergency Orders issued by the Supreme Court of Georgia, including with regard to conducting in-person proceedings.
2. All judges will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely, when possible.
3. Pursuant to the Supreme Court's May 11, 2020 Judicial Emergency Order, all other courts conducting in-person proceedings within a Brunswick Judicial Circuit courthouse are strongly encouraged to adopt this Operating Plan so there is uniformity throughout the courts for all litigants and visitors. In addition, all courts are required to conspicuously post the respective courtroom capacity limits in the context of the social distancing guidelines requiring a six-foot distance maintained between all individuals not of the same household, at all times.

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.4°F, or with new or worsening signs or symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, or having known close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19 will not report to work or enter the building, and should seek medical advice.
2. Each department within the courthouse will institute protective measures for all employees within that department in compliance with the CDC/GA DPH

guidelines regarding health screening the use of PPE, social distancing and sanitization.

Scheduling

In order to reduce occupancy in the court building at any given time, the judges will coordinate the scheduling of nonessential in-person proceedings.

Vulnerable Individuals

1. Individuals who are over age 65 and individuals of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly those not well controlled, including those who suffer from chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, serious heart conditions, immune disorders, diabetes, obesity, chronic kidney or liver disease, and those whose immune systems are compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy are considered to be vulnerable individuals.
2. Any vulnerable individual who is to appear for an in-person court proceeding may contact the office of the judge presiding over the proceeding to identify him or herself as a vulnerable individual. Vulnerable individuals who are scheduled for court will be accommodated as necessary, with said accommodations being determined by the presiding judge on a case by case basis in compliance with the current CDC/GA DPH guidelines.

Social Distancing

1. All visitors to the courthouse, including attorneys and their staff, who are not from the same household will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet at all times in all areas of the courthouse.
2. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each Superior Court courtroom has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom and courtroom seating will be monitored and enforced by court staff and/or the Sheriff. For individual courtroom capacity, see Appendix A hereto.

3. In each courtroom, counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, clerk, court reporter, and bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.
4. All non-closed court proceedings shall remain open to the general public as required by law; however, all individuals visiting the courthouse as a spectator or observer not directly involved in a proceeding as an attorney, party litigant or witness, shall be directed to the jury assembly room, or other appropriate room of the courthouse, to view the proceeding electronically.

Hygiene

Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed throughout each courthouse and in each courtroom.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, Sheriff's deputies will ask the individuals if they are feeling feverish; have a cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing; or have been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions will be refused admittance to the courthouse. Each visitor's name and contact information will be collected in the event there is an outbreak and contact tracing needs to be executed. This information will be maintained by security and not available for public dissemination. **All visitors have an affirmative duty to truthfully disclose this information to court personnel.**
2. When individuals attempt to enter the courthouse, Sheriff's deputies will use a thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.4°F will be refused admittance to the courthouse.
3. Inmates being transported from the jail to the court building will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and have their temperature taken prior to transport. Inmates with symptoms or a temperature equal to or above 99.6°F will not be transported to the court building.
4. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including surgical masks and gloves.

Face Coverings

1. All visitors entering the courthouse are required to wear a face covering (surgical mask) at all times.
2. Visitors should supply their own masks. In the event a visitor does not have his or her own mask, a disposable mask will be provided **if the supply is available.**

Cleaning

The courthouses and each courtroom will be thoroughly cleaned according to the standards set forth by the CDC and GA DPH after each session of court.

This Operating Plan is implemented with the concurrence of all five active judges of the Brunswick Judicial Circuit and shall apply to all proceedings conducted in any county courthouse and any Superior Court courtrooms within this Circuit.

Date: 5-15-20



STEPHEN G. SCARLETT, SR.
CHIEF JUDGE, SUPERIOR COURTS
BRUNSWICK JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

THIS NOTICE SHALL BE PROMINENTLY POSTED AT ALL COURTHOUSE ENTRANCES, ON THE OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT WEBSITE OF EACH COUNTY IN THE BRUNSWICK JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, AND SHALL BE DISSEMINATED ELECTRONICALLY TO ALL LOCAL BAR MEMBERS.

APPENDIX A

Appling County Courtroom Capacity

Gallery – 26

Jeff Davis County Courtroom Capacity

Gallery - 24

Wayne County Courtroom A Capacity

Gallery – 28

Wayne County Courtroom C Capacity

Gallery – 22

Glynn County Jury Assembly Room Capacity

Gallery – 36

Glynn County State Court Capacity

Gallery – 10

Camden County Jury Assembly Room Capacity

Gallery – 24

Camden County Courtroom Capacity

Gallery – 18 (with added chairs)