

COVID-19 PROTOCOL FOR CIVIL AND CRIMINAL CASES SCHEDULED IN DIVISION 1 SUPERIOR COURT OF FORSYTH COUNTY FOR THE TIME PERIOD FROM 5/14/20 THROUGH 6/12/20

Consistent with the Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice's second order extending declaration of statewide judicial emergency, the use of technology to conduct remote judicial proceedings is the preferred alternative to in-person proceedings. As such, all cases scheduled during the above referenced dates shall be conducted by videoconference using the Microsoft Teams platform and no continuances will be granted solely due to the ongoing judicial emergency.

If the parties agree to an in-person hearing, the court will grant the request and the hearing will proceed in-person but only in compliance with public health guidelines. In-person court proceedings will be conducted in such a manner as to protect the health of the litigants, lawyers, judges, court personnel, and the public.

The mandatory public health guidelines for in-person proceedings are as follows:

1. Social distancing- persons in the courtroom shall observe a minimum distance of 6 feet from each other except at counsel table and the witness stand for document exchanges.
2. Occupancy in courtroom shall be 20 or less persons including the bailiff, court security officer, court reporter and judge.
3. All visitors to the courthouse shall continue to be screened as required in the Bell-Forsyth Circuit 2nd amended judicial emergency order.
4. All personnel and visitors shall be outfitted with protective masks before entering the courtroom. Masks may be removed only when counsel is making oral argument, questioning witnesses or otherwise addressing the court. Parties and witnesses may remove masks when testifying.
5. Hand sanitizer shall be provided at various locations within the courtroom for frequent usage, especially after handing documents.
6. Cleaning and disinfection of tabletop surfaces, chairs, witness stand, lectern and any other common surface or area in frequent use shall be performed before and after each case.