

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF FULTON COUNTY
ATLANTA JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
STATE OF GEORGIA

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ORDER AMENDING COURTHOUSE SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR ALL CLASSES OF COURTS

Fulton Courts have strictly followed the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control (“CDC”) and Georgia Department of Public Health since the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic. This cautious approach reflects the involuntary nature of judicial proceedings. However, vaccines are now available to every Georgian. Remaining unvaccinated is, in most circumstances, a matter of personal choice.

On February 25th, 2022, the CDC revised its public health recommendations to focus on high-risk individuals and to reduce strain on Georgia’s healthcare system. The new guidelines classify COVID-19 risk in each Georgia county as “Low”, “Medium”, or “High”.¹ These classifications are based on the rate of new COVID hospitalizations, new reported COVID cases, and the number of hospital beds occupied by COVID patients. The CDC recommends different safety precautions for each risk level. Accordingly, the following safety guidelines and protocols are established.

GENERAL COURTHOUSE OPERATIONS WHEN FULTON COUNTY IS IN “LOW” OR “MEDIUM” COVID-19 RISK CATEGORIES

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that masks are optional but recommended for entry into the courthouse. High quality masks such N95 or KN95 masks are recommended for sensitive populations: the unvaccinated and those with underlying health conditions that place them at higher risk of severe disease. *Individual judges still may require masking in their courtrooms.*

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that social distancing in the public areas of the courthouse is no longer required. *Individual judges still may require social distancing in their courtrooms.*

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/community-levels.html>

IT IS FUTHER ORDERED that Personal Protection Equipment (“PPE”), to include but not be limited to disposable masks and gloves, be readily available for any individual who requests it.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that courts may continue to conduct in-person proceedings. Nothing in this Order shall be construed to limit any court’s ability to conduct virtual proceedings that are otherwise allowed by law, court rule, or consent of the parties.

GENERAL COURTHOUSE OPERATIONS WHEN FULTON COUNTY IS IN “HIGH” COVID-19 RISK CATEGORY

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that masks are required for entry into the courthouse and must be worn in all public areas of the courthouse, including courtrooms, except when the presiding judge permits removal to speak.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that social distancing of six (6) feet be observed in all public areas of the courthouse.

IT IS FUTHER ORDERED that Personal Protective Equipment (“PPE”), to include but not be limited to disposable masks and gloves, be readily available for all individuals who need it.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that courts may continue to conduct in-person proceedings subject to appropriate courtroom capacity limitations and staggering of cases to avoid unnecessary courtroom crowding. Nothing in this Order shall be construed to limit any court’s ability to conduct virtual proceedings that are otherwise allowed by law, court rule, or consent of the parties.

SPECIAL JURY TRIALS OPERATIONS THAT SUPERCEDE THE GENERAL OPERATION GUIDELINES OUTLINED ABOVE

Jury trial participants spend an extended amount of time in proximity of each other, often in crowded courtrooms. Accordingly, the following guidelines are hereby ordered and shall supersede any inconsistent general operation guidelines outlined above.

WHEN FULTON IS IN A “LOW” or “MEDIUM” COVID-19 RISK CATEGORY
WITH REGARD TO JURY TRIALS, IT IS ORDERED:

- Masks are strongly encouraged in the Jury Assembly Room.
- Social Distancing in the Jury Assembly Room is hereby reduced to three (3) feet.
- Masks are encouraged, but not required, in courtrooms *unless directed by the presiding judge in their courtroom.*
- Personal Protective Equipment (“PPE”), to include but not be limited to disposable masks and gloves, will be available for any individual who requests it.
- Social distancing requirements in the courtrooms are modified as follows:
 - Jurors that wish to sit in the jury box may do so without regard to social distancing.
 - Jurors not comfortable with sitting in the jury box may sit in the courtroom gallery while observing three (3) feet of social distancing. *Trial judges may require jurors to observe more than three (3) feet of social distancing.*
- The regular jury deliberation rooms for each courtroom may be used at the discretion of the presiding judge.

WHEN FULTON IS IN A “HIGH” COVID-19 RISK CATEGORY

WITH REGARD TO JURY TRIALS, IT IS ORDERED:

- Masks are required in all areas of the courthouse, including the jury assembly room and the courtrooms.
- Judges may permit mask removal by any person addressing the court or the jury.
- Social distancing of six (6) feet will be observed in the jury assembly room and the courtrooms.
- Special jury deliberation rooms that will accommodate six (6) feet of social distancing will be used.
- Personal Protective Equipment (“PPE”), to include but not be limited to disposable masks and gloves, will be available for any individual who needs it.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Sheriff of Fulton County shall post this Order on his public notification site and at the entrance to all courthouses.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Court Administrator shall immediately notify and serve the Administrative Office of the Courts at <https://georgiacourts.gov/covid-19-court-operating-guidelines-form/> so that this document may be posted on their website.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Court Administrator shall immediately notify and serve a copy of this Order and attached Memorandum and Guidelines on the judges and clerks of all courts sitting in this circuit.

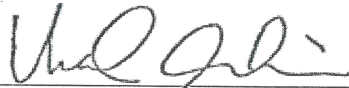
IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Court Administrator shall cause a copy of this Order and Guidelines to be posted prominently on this Court's website for public viewing.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Court Administrator shall cause courthouse signage and website messaging concerning safety guidelines to be updated consistent with this Order.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that previous Orders of this Court that are inconsistent with this Order are superseded by the terms of this Order. This Order shall remain in effect until vacated or modified by further order of this Court.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Court Administrator shall monitor Fulton County's COVID-19 risk level and immediately notify the judges and clerks of all courts sitting in this circuit of any change in risk classification.

SO ORDERED this 9th day of March, 2023.



THE HONORABLE URAL GLANVILLE
CHIEF / ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE
SUPERIOR COURT OF FULTON COUNTY
ATLANTA JUDICIAL CIRCUIT