

IN THE JUVENILE COURT OF
COBB COUNTY, GEORGIA

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CLERK'S OFFICE
JUVENILE COURT
COBB CO., GA

ORDER AMENDING SAFETY GUIDELINES

On March 14, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Honorable Harold D. Melton, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, issued an Order declaring Statewide Judicial Emergency is pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-61. In each successive month, that Order has been extended and modified by eleven separate Extension Orders, the most recent of which is set to expire March 9, 2021.

The Cobb Juvenile Court recognizes that most in-court proceedings compel the attendance of various individuals rather than allowing them to decide how best to protect their own health, and further recognizes that COVID-19 continues to spread in Georgia and Cobb County. In December of 2020, this Court at the request of Chief Judge Robert Leonard, decided to scale back the in-person operations, to only essential matters as defined in the Order entered by this Court on December 23, 2020. Following the entry of that Order, Cobb County and the State of Georgia experienced the worst spike in cases since the beginning of the pandemic. During that spike, this Court operated in almost an entirely virtual format unless cases were determined to be an essential matter requiring in-person attendance.

The court recognizes the necessary burden that the Order placed on litigants seeking access to justice. Upon observing that the rates of infection have decreased to the level that they were at Thanksgiving and after consultation with Chief Judge Robert Leonard, this court will revise its guidelines concerning in-person matters to allow litigants to appear in person.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the Order entered by this Court on December 23, 2020, limiting in-person attendance to essential matters is **VACATED**. The court will resume in-person proceedings consistent with the guidelines given in this Order and in strict compliance with the public health guidelines, the safety guidelines established by the court, and guidance issued by the Supreme Court. Nothing in this Order shall be construed to limit this Court's ability to conduct virtual proceedings that are otherwise allowed by law, court rule, or consent of the parties. This court will continue to conduct as many matters as possible in a virtual format.

In order to minimize the risk to public health and safety, **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the Cobb Juvenile Court will adopt the following scheduling order and procedures until further order of this court.

1. GENERAL CONCERNS

- a. All Juvenile Court hearings will be virtually accessible for those entitled access to the hearing.
- b. The court will remain open for the public, but they are encouraged to participate in court hearings virtually.
- c. The Juvenile Court Clerk's Office shall remain open during regular business hours.
- d. All persons entering Cobb County Juvenile Court shall comply with the current CDC recommendations, Executive Orders, Orders from the Supreme Court of Georgia, and Orders from the Chief Judge of the Cobb County Superior Court, including temperature checks, mask requirements, and limitations on room capacity.
- e. Persons wishing to participate or observe a scheduled hearing virtually may email ccjcvirtual@cobbcounty.org the Friday before the court hearing. Please include your name, the subject child's name, and the date and time of the hearing in your email.
- f. If any party requests that a matter be heard on an emergency basis, a request must be sent to the Judicial Assistant for the assigned Judge.
 - i. Judge A. Patterson or Judge K. West – Contact Star Simmons at Gayle.Simmons@cobbcounty.org (770) 528 – 2224
 - ii. Judge J. Hamby or Judge W. Grannis – Contact Donelle Keaton at Donelle.Keaton@cobbcounty.org (770) 528 – 2428

2. NOTICE TO THE SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT: Adult inmates held at the Cobb County Adult Detention Center and juveniles held at the youth detention centers will continue to participate in court hearings virtually unless otherwise ordered.

3. PRELIMINARY PROTECTIVE HEARINGS and DELINQUENCY DETENTION HEARINGS will be heard by the designated on-call Judge according to the schedule below on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons at 1:00 p.m., except on holidays.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS, PROGRAMS AND ON-SITE SERVICES

- a. Each Judge will be able to conduct specialty courts virtually or as designated by the Judge.
- b. All group programs that are scheduled to be conducted on-site at the Juvenile Court is to be handled virtually or as designated by the Judge.
- c. If there are any questions regarding individual services, parties are to contact the Accountability Court Coordinator or Probation Supervisor.

5. SCHEDULE

- a. The Judges will alternate dependency and delinquency cases in the following manner:

	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri
Judge Hamby	Dependency	Delinquency	Dependency	Delinquency	Special Set/Individual Hearings
Judge Patterson	Delinquency	Dependency	Delinquency	Dependency	Special Set/Individual Hearings
Judge Grannis	Dependency	Delinquency	Dependency	Delinquency	Special Set/Individual Hearings
Judge West	Delinquency	Dependency	Delinquency	Dependency	Special Set/Individual Hearings

- b. Additional duties and specialty courts assigned to the Judges are as follows:
- i. Hamby= Family Treatment Court
 - ii. Patterson= Juvenile Drug Court
 - iii. Grannis= Rising Court
 - iv. West= Traffic Court, CHINS
- c. The Judges will rotate court weeks in the following manner:
- i. Judge 1- Five cases at 9 a.m. and five cases at 2 p.m.
 - ii. Judge 2- Five cases at 9 a.m. and five cases at 2 p.m.
 1. Because dependency cases tend to have more people and attorneys present, this Judge will hear dependency cases on opposite days from Judge 1.
 - iii. Judge 3- On Call Judge
 1. This Judge is on call 24-hours a day from Monday at 9:00 a.m. until the following Monday at 9:00 a.m.
 2. This Judge will hear Detention and Preliminary Protective Hearings only each Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 1:00 p.m. except on holidays. Additionally, they are available for verbal removal decisions on a 24-hour basis.
 3. If necessary, this Judge will hear adjudications with short time limitations and emergencies for all Judges.
 4. This Judge will have limited access to waiting areas.
 5. This Judge may set individual hearings only may have only one case in the courtroom at a time, and must ensure that there is no overlap of these cases in the courthouse at any time. These hearings will not have a start time at 9:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., or 2:00 p.m. to limit traffic in the building at those times.

iv. Judge 4- Limited Hearings

1. This Judge will have limited access to waiting areas.
2. This Judge may set individual hearings only may have only one case in the courtroom at a time, and must ensure that there is no overlap of these cases in the courthouse at any time. These hearings will not have a start time of 9:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m. or 2:00 p.m. to limit traffic in the building at those specific times.

d. The following schedule will be implemented from February 22, 2021 until December 31, 2021, or until further notice:

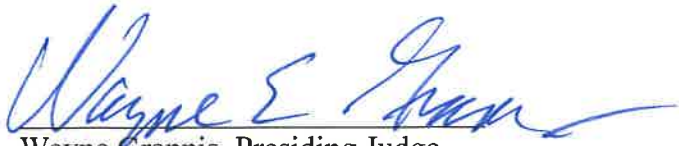
WEEK	Judge 1- In Court	Judge 2- In Court	Judge 3- On Call	Judge 4- Limited Hearings
2/22/21	Grannis	Patterson	Hamby	West
3/1/21	West	Hamby	Patterson	Grannis
3/8/21	Patterson	Grannis	West	Hamby
3/15/21	Hamby	West	Grannis	Patterson
3/22/21	Grannis	Patterson	Hamby	West
3/29/21	West	Hamby	Patterson	Grannis
4/5/21	Patterson	Grannis	West	Hamby
4/12/21	Hamby	West	Grannis	Patterson
4/19/21	Grannis	Patterson	Hamby	West
4/26/21	West	Hamby	Patterson	Grannis
5/3/21	Patterson	Grannis	West	Hamby
5/10/21	Hamby	West	Grannis	Patterson
5/17/21	Grannis	Patterson	Hamby	West
5/24/21	West	Hamby	Patterson	Grannis
5/31/21	Patterson	Grannis	West	Hamby
6/7/21	Hamby	West	Grannis	Patterson
6/14/21	Grannis	Patterson	Hamby	West
6/21/21	West	Hamby	Patterson	Grannis
6/28/21	Patterson	Grannis	West	Hamby
7/5/21	Hamby	West	Grannis	Patterson
7/12/21	Grannis	Patterson	Hamby	West
7/19/21	West	Hamby	Patterson	Grannis
7/26/21	Patterson	Grannis	West	Hamby
8/2/21	Hamby	West	Grannis	Patterson
8/9/21	Grannis	Patterson	Hamby	West
8/16/21	West	Hamby	Patterson	Grannis
8/23/21	Patterson	Grannis	West	Hamby
8/30/21	Hamby	West	Grannis	Patterson
9/6/21	Grannis	Patterson	Hamby	West
9/13/21	West	Hamby	Patterson	Grannis
9/20/21	Patterson	Grannis	West	Hamby

9/27/21	Hamby	West	Grannis	Patterson
10/4/21	Grannis	Patterson	Hamby	West
10/11/21	West	Hamby	Patterson	Grannis
10/18/21	Patterson	Grannis	West	Hamby
10/25/21	Hamby	West	Grannis	Patterson
11/1/21	Grannis	Patterson	Hamby	West
11/8/21	West	Hamby	Patterson	Grannis
11/15/21	Patterson	Grannis	West	Hamby
11/22/21	Hamby	West	Grannis	Patterson
11/29/21	Grannis	Patterson	Hamby	West
12/6/21	West	Hamby	Patterson	Grannis
12/13/21	Patterson	Grannis	West	Hamby
12/20/21	Hamby	West	Grannis	Patterson
12/27/21	Grannis	Patterson	Hamby	West

6. Waiting Rooms

- a. Cobb County Juvenile Court currently has two waiting rooms that have been transformed to comply with social distancing measures.
- b. DFCS employees, children in DFCS care and foster parents will be admitted to the five-separate office/areas in the DFCS suite within the courthouse.
- c. Everyone that currently has an office in the building will report back to their offices when not on an active court case. The courtroom clerk will call them to return to court when their case is called.
- d. While virtual attendance is preferred, CASA volunteers attending essential hearings will be appropriately distanced and will wait for cases on the 5th floor as directed by CASA officers.

SO ORDERED, THIS THE 1 DAY OF March, 2021.


Wayne Grannis, Presiding Judge
Cobb County Juvenile Court

SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR COBB SUPERIOR COURT, STATE COURT, PROBATE COURT, JUVENILE COURT, MAGISTRATE COURT, AND ALL MUNICIPAL COURTS

Virtual Proceedings Encouraged For All Court Functions.

All courts are encouraged to continue to utilize technology to the greatest extent possible in an effort to reduce the number of people coming to their respective courthouses. Courts should give appropriate consideration and deference to the requests of attorneys and parties wishing to appear virtually.

The courthouses remain open for public access, but members of the public are encouraged to stay home. Courts conducting virtual hearings that are not open for public access shall satisfy the constitutional mandate of open courtrooms by livestream.

Since the pandemic began, most courts in the Cobb Judicial Circuit have developed procedures and deployed technology that allow for most essential and non-essential functions to be conducted virtually. Courts are encouraged to continue conducting virtual proceedings but may hold in-person proceedings in strict compliance with the Orders of this Court, the Supreme Court, and consistent with the updated public health guidance from DPH and the CDC.

All participants in essential in-person proceedings are to comply with the following safety guidelines:

1. **Please leave all non-essential people at home.** Avoid bringing children or family members, especially the elderly, to court.
2. No one should come to court if they are not feeling well or have a **temperature above 100 degrees**. Contact the Assigned Judge's office to be excused and to have your case rescheduled.
3. Before you come to the courthouse, please answer the four questions below. If your answer to any of the four questions is YES, then you should not come to the courthouse. Instead, contact the Assigned Judge's office to be excused and to have your case rescheduled.
 - a. Have you had a recent onset of coughing?
 - b. Have you had any recent difficulty breathing?
 - c. Have you been around anyone who has been outside of the country in the last 14 days, or
 - d. Have you been around anyone who has been diagnosed with or is under investigation for potential COVID-19 infection?
4. Prior to entering the courthouse, you should answer the above questions again, and if your answer to any of the above questions is YES, then contact the Assigned Judge's office to be excused and to have your case rescheduled.
5. **Mask or face covering required.** Everyone, including Judges and court staff, coming to the courthouses shall have a mask or face covering on to enter the building. The mask or face covering shall remain on while in the courthouse, unless you are given permission to remove the mask or face covering by the judge.
6. Entering the courthouses: If you are entering the courthouse and there is a line, **maintain six feet of social distancing**. Where there are markings on the ground establishing safe spacing, they are to be followed.
7. **Temperature checks:** As you enter the courthouse your temperature may be taken. If you have a fever and are turned away from the courthouse, contact the Assigned Judge's office to be excused and to have your case rescheduled.

8. Upon entry to the courthouse, you will then answer the above COVID-19 questions again, and if your answer to any of the above questions is YES, then contact the Assigned Judge's office to be excused and to have your case rescheduled.
9. The **social distancing rules are in effect in and around all Cobb County courthouses**. Everyone shall maintain at least six feet distance from anyone else.
10. Elevators and stairs: People entering the courthouses are encouraged to use the stairs to access the upper floors if they are able. The elevators are **limited to 1 or 2 people** at a time based on their size.
11. **Hand sanitizer** stations are on every floor in the courthouses. Everyone is encouraged to use it frequently.
12. Restrooms are located on every floor and everyone is encouraged to **wash hands frequently**.
13. Do not use the water fountains. Property management/facilities directors are encouraged to disconnect the water fountains if they are able.
14. Courtrooms: There are **limits on the number of people** who may safely enter a courtroom to comply with the social distancing requirements. These limits vary depending on the size of the courtroom. If you anticipate that your case will require more people in attendance at your hearing than can safely fit into the courtroom, then notify the Assigned Judge's office sufficiently in advance of the hearing so that accommodations can be made for overflow.
15. In the courtrooms, observers and participants may sit in the gallery on the **designated marked seats only**. No one may approach the bench without the permission of the Assigned Judge. Everyone is encouraged to remain outside the courtroom until their case is called. Witnesses are encouraged to remain outside the courtroom until they are called. The witness will testify from the marked witness seat.
16. Exhibits should be made available in **electronic format** in advance of the hearing so that they are not passed back and forth between multiple people in the courtroom. Contact the Assigned Judge for instructions on exhibits and copies of their evidence protocols and procedures.
17. Any court conducting a calendar of matters shall take precautions to **stagger matters** appropriately and limit the size of the calendar to avoid large gatherings.

Updated court information is posted on the Cobb County website at:
<https://www.cobbcounty.org/communications/info-center/covid-19-updates>