

**IN THE PROBATE COURT OF GILMER COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA**

IN RE:

**Covid-19 Court Operating Guidelines
During Statewide Judicial Emergency**

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ORDER

Pursuant to the Order Declaring Statewide Judicial Emergency (Amended) entered by Chief Justice Harold Melton on March 14, 2020, and extended by his subsequent Fifth Order Extending Declaration of Statewide Judicial Emergency entered on August 11, 2020, and Chief Superior Court Judge Brenda Weaver's Fifth Order Extending Declaration of Judicial Emergency in the Appalachia Judicial Circuit entered on August 12, 2020. The Probate Court of Gilmer County will be providing limited in-person functions through September 10, 2020 or until these Orders are terminated or extended.

THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the following Operating Guidelines are in effect for the Probate Court of Gilmer County until further notice:

GENERAL OPERATING GUIDELINES

1. All individuals entering the Gilmer County Courthouse, including elected officials, staff, and members of the public, shall have their temperature taken by court security using a touchless thermometer. In the event the temperature registers as 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, entry will be denied.
2. All individuals entering the courthouse, including elected officials, staff and members of the public, shall use hand sanitizer upon entering the courthouse and again before entering the courtroom.
3. Social distancing-persons in the courtroom shall observe a minimum distance of six (6) feet from each other except at the counsel table and the witness stand during document exchanges.
4. Occupancy in the courtroom shall be 10 or less persons excluding the bailiffs, court security officers, court reporter, court personnel and Judge.
5. All individuals entering the courtroom shall be required to wear masks. 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.
6. Cleaning and disinfection of tabletop surfaces, chairs, witness stand, lectern/podium, and any other common surface areas in frequent use shall be performed before and after each case by bailiff.
7. Hand sanitizer shall be provided at various locations within the courthouse for frequent usage, especially after handling documents.
8. Attorneys shall advise their clients and witnesses to notify them if they show any symptoms of illness, even mild symptoms, prior to or after court or have been exposed to a Coronavirus (COVID-19) positive individual. Attorneys should contact the assigned judge's office as soon as possible if they, their clients, or witnesses, are showing symptoms or have been exposed to someone who tested positive for Coronavirus (COVID-19) and have recently been to court or have an upcoming hearing.

SUBJECT MATTER SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

ESTATES AND GUARDIANSHIPS

1. To minimize in-person contact, pleadings should be completed before coming to the Probate Court to file. Information on how to access Georgia Probate Court Standard Forms can be found at www.georgiacourts.gov/probate.
2. Pleadings and documents may be filed in person or by mailing to 1 Broad Street, Suite 204 Ellijay, GA 30540. Please call ahead to arrange payment of court costs.
3. Oaths in uncontested matters may be administered at front counter.
4. For in-person hearings where videoconferencing is not practical, in-court seating will be limited due to social distancing. Litigants and attorneys will be seated first. Others will be allowed into the courtroom as space permits.
5. Witnesses will be sequestered in compliance with social distancing requirements.
6. The Courtroom will be cleaned and disinfected as appropriate after each proceeding.

TRAFFIC COURT

1. For matters that do not require an in-person appearance, defendants may still pay fines online at www.ezcourtpay.com or by calling 800-262-0128.
2. If a charge requires a Court appearance, a defendant may waive arraignment, plead not guilty, and request a bench trial or jury trial without coming to Court. Contact the Probate Court for more information.
3. Attorneys wanting to work out a plea agreement or discuss charge(s) with a prosecutor, call 706-635-5381.
4. For anyone who cannot afford an attorney, contact the Magistrate Court Office at 706-635-2515 and inquire about applying for the Public Defender.
5. For those who have appeared at a previous Court date and have completed the terms of a plea agreement, contact the Court for available options to resolve the matter.
6. Please observe floor and seat markers and follow directions of Court security.
7. Unless otherwise noted, masks will be required to enter the Courtroom.
8. In-court seating will be limited due to social distancing.
9. The Courtroom will be cleaned and disinfected as appropriate after each proceeding.
10. To request a continuance for good cause, contact the Court with request and reason(s) for the continuance request before the scheduled Court date.

WEAPONS CARRY LICENSES

1. Only Applicants may enter for weapons carry license application. Only one (1) applicant per window, all others must wait outside in hallway to allow other applicants to finish due to limited space for social distancing. Friends and family members must wait outside.
2. To minimize in-person contact and to speed up the process, complete the application online by following the link on the Court's website at www.gilmercounty-ga.gov/probate-judge/ or at www.georgiaprobaterecords.com.

MARRIAGE LICENSES

1. Only Applicants may enter for marriage license application. Only one (1) applicant per window, all others must wait outside in hallway to allow other applicants to finish due to limited space for social distancing. Friends and family members must wait outside.
2. To minimize in-person contact and to speed up the process, complete the application online by following the link on the Court's website at www.gilmercounty-ga.gov/probate-judge/ or at www.georgiaprobaterecords.com.

ESTATES AND TITLE RESEARCH

1. All in-person record research is by appointment. Call the Probate Court Office at 706-635-4763 before coming to the Courthouse.
2. Public records dating back to 2017 are viewable online at www.georgiaprobaterecords.com. Older records are scanned and posted online as time permits.

ALL OTHER MATTERS

Contact the Probate Court Office for more information.

SO ORDERED this 15th day of October, 2020.



Scott C. Chastain, Judge
Probate Court of Gilmer County