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SUPERIOR COURT

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SUPERIOR COURTS
EIGHTH JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT
OCONEE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

LAUREN WALKER
CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT

Bleckley, Dodge, Montgomery, Pulaski, Telfair & Wheeler Counties

SARAH F. WALL, CHIEF JUDGE
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December 28, 2020

RE: Extension of Statewide Judicial Emergency Order and Limitation on In-Person Court Proceedings

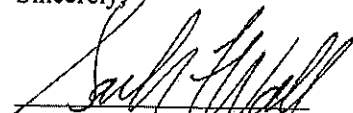
Dear Clerks of Court:

Pursuant to the Supreme Court of Georgia's Order Modifying Ninth Order Extending Declaration of Judicial Emergency and the Oconee Judicial Circuit's Order Amending Courthouse Safety Guidelines for all Classes of Court issued on December 28, 2020, in-person court proceedings have been limited to essential functions. Virtual proceedings shall be used by default unless otherwise indicated by the presiding judge. As explained in the local order, the definition of an essential function varies and is open to some degree of interpretation. In an effort to reduce confusion about the implementation of this policy, the following procedures are being adopted:

- Calendar calls and arraignments for the month of January are cancelled.
- Motions shall be heard virtually. In the event that a matter cannot be heard virtually, the parties or their attorneys of record shall contact the presiding judge to explain why their particular case cannot be heard virtually and shall recommend a course of action. The presiding judge has discretion to hear the case virtually, to continue the case to a later date, or, if the matter constitutes an essential function, to hear the case in-person following all health guidelines.
- Habeas corpus days may proceed as scheduled if arrangements are made to handle virtually.
- Probation revocations shall proceed as scheduled to be handled virtually, where possible. The District Attorney's Office and the Public Defender's Office or privately retained attorney should discuss the procedure with the presiding judge in advance of the hearing.

The Oconee Circuit's Order applies to all classes of court in the Oconee Judicial Circuit. The judge of each of said court is authorized to define what "essential" means in the context of their class of court but are reminded to look to the Supreme Court of Georgia's prior guidance on the matter, consider the severity of the COVID-19 health crisis, and utilize technology for virtual proceedings wherever possible.

Sincerely,


Sarah F. Wall, Chief Judge
Oconee Judicial Circuit