

FILED IN OFFICE

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## ORDER AND PUBLIC NOTICE FROM THE WALKER COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT

Whereas, the Governor of the State of Georgia has determined that a public health emergency exists due to the spread of the Coronavirus/COVID-19, and Whereas, that a State of Emergency constitutes a “Judicial Emergency” pursuant to O.C.G.A. Section 38-3-60 et. seq., See O.C.G.A. Section 38-3-60(2) ,

Now therefore, pursuant to Order of the Supreme Court of Georgia by the Honorable Chief Justice Melton and Order of the Chief Judge of the Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit, the Honorable Kristina Cook Graham, affecting Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade and Walker Counties,

The Honorable Don W. Thompson, presiding Judge of the Superior Court of Walker County, Georgia, during this period of crisis, does hereby establish the following rules of court until such time as this “Judicial Emergency” continues:

- (1) All Superior Court and Drug Court Staff are directed to work remotely from home and be available for scheduling “Essential” matters for hearing via telephone or video conferencing.
- (2) Circuit business, both civil and criminal, will continue, and the court will handle **ONLY** essential matters as outlined in the above referenced orders. What is deemed “Essential” will be determined on a case by case basis by the presiding Judge. Attorneys or pro se litigants shall contact the court such that a determination can be made as to whether a matter is deemed essential and requires a hearing during this time of Judicial Emergency.
- (3) To schedule a matter that is deemed “Essential” by the Court, please contact Judge Thompson’s Legal Assistant, Cindy Combs, at 706/638-1650 or by email at [callencombs@lmjc.net](mailto:callencombs@lmjc.net). To schedule a matter regarding Drug Court that is deemed “Essential” by the Court, please contact the Drug Court Coordinator, Gretchen Neal, at 706/639-0899;
- (4) A hearing will be scheduled if “necessary” and “essential” pursuant to the above referenced orders.
- (5) Should a hearing be required, the following in court rules shall apply:

- a. Court shall remain open to the extent feasible to handle the essential functions deemed necessary by the court.
- b. There shall be no bench conferences. All parties and counsel shall present their cases from counsel tables or as otherwise directed by the court as it deems necessary.
- c. To the extent feasible, all parties and their counsel shall exercise a policy of social distancing while in court keeping a safe distance between them and their neighbor;
- d. All parties or spectators in the courtroom shall exercise a policy of social distancing and shall sit with at least one empty chair space between themselves and their neighbor.
- e. Individuals who are non-parties or that otherwise are not involved in the cases before the court are encouraged not to be present in the courtroom;
- f. All uncontested matters that cannot be resolved by Motion for Judgment on the Pleadings or by consent order are continued tentatively until April 21, 2020.
- g. All non-essential matters, including non-emergency domestic relations cases, other non-emergency civil litigation, criminal arraignments, or other criminal matters not affecting the immediate liberty of a defendant, are continued until further order of the court or until notice by the Clerk of the Superior Court of Walker County, Georgia.

Thank you in advance for your patience and compliance with these Court Rules during this time of crisis.

SO ORDERED THIS 6 DAY OF MARCH, 2020.

  
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HONORABLE DON W. THOMPSON  
SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE, LMJC