

## COVID-19 PROCEDURES

The Judges of the Superior Court of the Conasauga Judicial Circuit recognize that this is a challenging and trying time for our justice system. In an effort to maintain access to the Court and the efficient administration of justice, the Court is implementing procedures allowing the use of technology to comply with the terms of Justice Melton's order. We understand these procedures will not be perfect and may need to be adjusted over time. We understand there will be a significant learning curve for many of us. We appreciate your patience and your willingness to learn.

During the remainder of Chief Justice Melton's March 14, 2020 order declaring a judicial emergency\*, and any further extensions of that order, the Superior Court of the Conasauga Judicial Circuit will follow these procedures :

1. Uncontested divorces and adoptions: Uncontested divorce may be done by judgment on the pleadings in compliance with O.C.G.A 9-11-12.

It shall be the responsibility of counsel to provide the court with a courtesy copy of the motion along with a final judgment and decree. This shall be done by emailing said documents to the judge's secretary. Uncontested divorces may also be done remotely via the Zoom app. In order to schedule an uncontested divorce via Zoom, counsel shall call the Presiding Judge's secretary and schedule a time. Counsel shall email the final judgement and decree along with any additional required documents to the Presiding Judge's secretary at least one hour prior to the scheduled time.

2. Mediation: The Court's standing order on mediation remains in effect. No mediations will be held at the Courthouse but may be done by remote means in the discretion of the mediators and parties.
3. Contested domestics: Contested domestic matters will be heard via Zoom. At the beginning of each calendar, the parties will join the Court via Zoom and make announcements regarding each case. At that time, the Court will assign each case a time to join the Court via Zoom for the hearing. Counsel shall have all documentary evidence scanned and ready to email to the Court and opposing counsel during the hearing.
4. Ex parte hearings: Ex parte hearings shall be heard via Zoom. Counsel shall call the Presiding Judge's secretary and schedule a time for the ex parte. Counsel shall email all pleadings including the proposed order to the secretary at least thirty minutes prior to the scheduled hearing time.
5. Temporary Protective Orders: To the extent possible, ex parte TPO's will be heard via Zoom subject to the same procedures as other ex parte matters. To the extent possible the two-party hearing will also be heard via Zoom. The Court recognizes that many TPO cases involve pro se parties who may not have the Zoom app available and will work with the parties to find a safe solution.
6. Divorcing Parents Seminar: The Court will accept on-line courses for the duration of Justice Melton's order(s) and for thirty days after the expiration of the most recent order.

7. Witnesses: It shall be the responsibility of counsel to have all contact information necessary to call witnesses via the Zoom app and to have instructed witnesses on use of the app.

If you have any questions regarding the specifics of the Zoom app, please call the judge's law clerk. If you have scheduling questions, please call the judge's secretary.

\*Counsel is reminded Justice Melton's order states in part:  
"Pursuant to OCGA § 38-3-62, during the period of this Order, the undersigned hereby suspends, tolls, extends, and otherwise grants relief from any deadlines or other time schedules or filing requirements imposed by otherwise applicable statutes, rules, regulations, or court orders, whether in civil or criminal cases or administrative matters, including, but not limited to any: (1) statute of limitation; (2) time within which to issue a warrant; (3) time within which to try a case for which a demand for speedy trial has been filed; (4) time within which to hold a commitment hearing; (5) deadline or other schedule regarding the detention of a juvenile; (6) time within which to return a bill of indictment or an accusation or to bring a matter before a grand jury; (7) time within which to file a writ of habeas corpus; (8) time within which discovery or any aspect thereof is to be completed; (9) time within which to serve a party; (10) time within which to appeal or to seek the right to appeal any order, ruling, or other determination; and (11) such other legal proceedings as determined to be necessary by the authorized judicial official."