

Magistrate Judges

Chief Magistrate
Melinda Anderson

Associate Magistrates

Angela C. Rogers
Jimmie R. Bomar
Gerald Morris
Joelyn Pirkle

Staff

Deputy Clerks

Miranda Cole
Wanda Griffin
Lydia Moran
Casey Brady
Kim Sachau

LIBERTY COUNTY MAGISTRATE COURT

201 South Main Street, Justice Center Bldg., Suite 2100

Magistrate Court Courtroom

Hinesville, Georgia 31313

(912) 368-2063

MEMORANDUM

TO: All litigants, attorneys and members of the public
FROM: Chief Magistrate Judge Melinda Anderson, Liberty County
DATE: June 24, 2020

Chief Justice Harold D. Melton of the Supreme Court of Georgia issued an amended Order Declaring Statewide Judicial Emergency on March 14, 2020. The Order “**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.” All deadlines – including for initial filing, service, answers, and fine payments – are suspended during the judicial emergency.

On June 12th the Chief Justice issued a THIRD ORDER EXTENDING DECLARATION OF STATEWIDE JUDICIAL EMERGENCY. In accordance with said order, the Magistrate Court will handle matters to the extent feasible and consistent with this Declaration, public health guidance and the United States and Georgia constitutions and applicable statutes and court rules, including the public’s right of access to judicial proceedings and a criminal defendant’s right to confrontation and open courtrooms. These procedures shall remain in effect while the Judicial Emergency is in place or until further Order of the Chief Magistrate of Liberty County, Georgia.

Updated court information is posted on the Liberty County Magistrate Court webpage at www.libertycountyga.com/department/?structureid=55

GENERAL SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR LIBERTY COUNTY MAGISTRATE COURT

You will **have to comply** with all safety measures in place by Justice Center’s security to enter the building.

You will **have to comply** with all safety measures in place by the Magistrate Court to enter the courtroom and or office. The safety measures for Magistrate Court include:

- The Magistrate Court will remain open for the public, but they are encouraged to stay home. Only parties, attorneys and necessary witnesses should appear.
- Please leave all non-essential people at home. Avoid bringing children or family members, especially the elderly, to court.

- No one should come to court if they are not feeling well or have a temperature of 100 or higher. Contact the Magistrate Court to be excused and to have your case rescheduled. You will be screened and your temperature checked before entering the courtroom and or office. Anyone with a temperature of 100 or higher will not enter.
- Please answer the seven questions below before you come to the Magistrate Court and or Justice Center.
 - 1) In the last 14 days, have you had a fever of 100 degrees or higher?
 - 2) Have you had a recent onset of coughing?
 - 3) Have you had any recent difficulty breathing and or shortness of breath?
 - 4) Have you had a recent upper respiratory illness accompanied by fever?
 - 5) Have you had a recent change in sense of taste or smell?
 - 6) In the last 14 days, have you or anyone you have had contact with been outside of the country?
 - 7) Have you or anyone you have had contact with been diagnosed with or is under investigation for potential COVID-19 infection?

If your answer to **any** of the seven questions is **YES**, then you should not come to the Court and or Justice Center. Instead, contact the Magistrate Court to be excused and to have your case rescheduled.

- Prior to entering the Magistrate Court and or Justice Center, you should answer the above questions again. If your answer to **any** of the above questions is **YES**, then contact the Magistrate Court to be excused and to have your case rescheduled.
- **MASK OR FACE COVERING REQUIRED.** Everyone coming to the Magistrate Court **shall** have a mask or face covering on to enter the Magistrate Court. The mask or face covering **shall** remain on while in the Magistrate Court, unless you are given permission to remove the mask or face covering by the judge or other court staff member.
- You **must** use hand sanitizer before entering the Magistrate Court.
- The **social distancing rules are in effect in and around the Magistrate Court.** Everyone **shall** maintain at least 6 (six) feet distance from anyone else.
- Courtrooms: There are limits on the number of people who may safely enter a courtroom to comply with the social distancing requirements. If you anticipate your case will require more people in attendance at your hearing than can safely fit into the courtroom, and then notify the Magistrate Court sufficiently in advance of the hearing so that accommodations can be made for overflow.
- In the courtroom, observers may sit in the gallery on the marked "X" only. No one may approach the bench without the permission of the judge or the clerk. People are encouraged to remain outside the courtroom until their case is called. Witnesses are encouraged to remain outside the courtroom until they are called.

As long as there is a Judicial Emergency, **the following will occur in Magistrate Court:**

1. General Civil – General Civil Calendars are cancelled during the Judicial Emergency that was scheduled prior to the Judicial Emergency. Hearings shall be done at the discretion of the Judge. For all hearings, there shall be strict compliance with public health guidance and social distancing requirements outlined above.
If you have internet access, please consider E-filing on-line for civil cases, including Small Claims, Garnishments and Dispossessories (Evictions) at <https://www.libertyco.com/services/ECourtServices.aspx>
2. Criminal Calendar – Through the remainder of June – Criminal calendars that were scheduled prior to the Judicial Emergency is cancelled during the Judicial Emergency. Judges shall continue to hear:
 - Arrest Warrants – Law Enforcement and Family Violence
 - Search Warrants
 - Initial Appearances / Bond Hearings
 - Extradition Hearings

On June 8, 2020, the Magistrate Court did begin to increase the in-court schedule. For civil and criminal court dates after June 8, 2020, contact the Magistrate Court.

As always, be sure to bring all evidence you have for your case, such as; contracts, ledgers, receipts, correspondence, pictures, or any witnesses. Be prepared to provide a copy to the Judge and all parties on the day of your hearing if you plan to present any documents to the Court on your hearing date. If you are unable to provide the Judge and all parties copies of your documents be prepared to pay at a rate of \$1.00 per copy. This applies to paper documents only. Photos and other documents on Cell phones and other electronic devices **must** be printed in order to be considered as evidence. Your evidence may not be considered, if your evidence has not been printed from those devices.

Please call our office **(912) 368-2063** or the Clerk's Office **(912) 876-3625** if you have any questions or if your matter can be resolved with a phone call.

These guidelines are subject to change as new information is discovered or we become aware of any problems.