

**34<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit**  
**Franklin County, Alabama**  
**Administrative Order**  
**Guidelines for Court Operations**  
**Effective May 18, 2020**

When the Alabama Supreme Court allows for the expansion of in-person court hearings, proceedings in the 34<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit shall transition to an initial phase of expanded hearings as follows and subject to the Supreme Court's Order:

1. Hearing participants shall consist of the parties and attorneys;
2. The parties and attorneys shall enter the courthouse through the front doors, unless handicap accommodations are necessary, in which case the participant may enter through the handicap accessible side door;
3. Prior to entering the courthouse, each attorney shall confirm with his or her client that the client does not have COVID-19 (virus), is not sick, does not have symptoms of the virus, and has not been around anyone with the virus or showing symptoms of the virus;
4. All attorneys and parties shall check in with security at the entrance of the courthouse no sooner than 30 minutes prior to the time set for hearing or trial.
5. From there, all attorneys must move to the courtroom floor. All parties, may use the stairs or take the elevators directly to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and await in the hallway or lobby area to be called for their hearing or trial;
6. Only four people may be present at a time in the elevator;

7. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, parties shall sit in marked places on the benches and chairs in the courtroom, and in the hall and lobby area;
8. When the Judge is ready for the parties, the attorneys for a specific case may direct and accompany the parties to the courtroom;
9. Upon arrival to the courtroom floor, the parties shall take a seat in designated places in the hall or lobby until being called into the courtroom;
10. Other than court personnel, no more than 10 participants shall be allowed into the courtroom at a time and shall be separated by the appropriate distance (6 feet) from each other, and from court personnel. However, if the Alabama Supreme Court allows, and his or her courtroom has the necessary room, then the Judge presiding may permit others into the courtroom separated by the appropriate distance;
11. Witnesses shall be placed on standby and shall remain out of the courthouse until the Judge is ready for them at which time the witness will be contacted by the party's attorney or by the pro se party. The witness shall go to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor courtroom and shall be transferred from there by the process described above;
12. During this transition period, court dockets shall be set at time intervals (staggered). Once capacity is reached on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor in the hall and in the courtroom, no party shall be allowed up from the first floor until space becomes available;
13. Upon completion of a hearing, all case participants shall exit the courthouse immediately.

14. With courtroom time at a premium due to space limitations, in cases with an attorney on each side, the attorneys are expected to conduct settlement negotiations in advance of in-person hearings;
15. Also, due to space limitations, attorneys will not be able to confer with their clients in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor courtroom;
16. At this time, all Judge's offices shall be off-limits unless permission is given by the Judge or staff;
17. The use of restrooms shall be limited to one person at a time;
18. Hand sanitizer stations are provided in the first floor lobby area and the second floor lobby area;
19. Anyone not complying with the requirements of this order, including the social distancing requirements, may be subject to contempt of court, and removal from the courthouse;
20. This order shall remain effective until further Administrative Order – Guidelines for Court Operations.

DONE this the 15<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2020.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry L. Dempsey", written over a horizontal line.

Terry L. Dempsey  
Circuit Judge