

**6th Judicial Circuit
Tuscaloosa 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 6th 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 basement door off the back alley;
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 on the first floor of the courthouse no sooner than 30 minutes prior to the time set for hearing or trial. Each shall be screened by security with a digital thermometer;
5. From there, all attorneys must move to their courtroom floor. All parties, however, will take the elevators directly to the 3rd floor north courtroom and hall to await being called up for their hearing or trial. A party without an attorney must know the Court and Judge for his or her case to be able to proceed to the 3rd floor;
6. Only four people may be present at a time in an elevator;
7. On the 3rd floor, parties shall sit in marked places on the benches and chairs in the courtroom, and in the marked places on the benches and chairs in the hall;
8. When a Judge is ready for the parties, his or her staff shall call the 3rd floor courtroom monitor who shall announce to the parties that they are needed, tell them the floor where they need to report, and direct them to the elevators. Or, at the prompting of the Judge,

attorneys for a specific case may appear on the 3rd floor to direct and accompany the parties to their courtroom;

9. Upon arrival at their courtroom floor, the parties shall take a seat in designated places in the hall until being called into 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. Witness 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 3rd 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 3rd floor courtroom and hall, 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 3rd floor courtroom;
16. At this time, all Judge's offices shall be off-limits unless permission is given by the Judge or staff. Also, the clerk's office is off limits unless permission is given by the Judge presiding over the case;
17. The use of restrooms shall be limited to one person at a time;
18. Hand sanitizers and PPE shall be provided on the first floor at check-in;
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—Guideline for Court Operations.**

*At Juvenile Court, all participants shall enter the Juvenile Justice Center lobby, and take a seat in marked places to await admittance into the courtroom.

**Judges may continue to conduct virtual hearings in accordance with previous Administrative Orders from the Alabama Supreme Court.

DONE this 12th day of May, 2020.

/s/ ALLEN W. MAY, JR.
PRESIDING JUDGE