

JUL 05 2020

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER (AMENDED) 20TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, STATE OF ALABAMA
(APPLICABLE TO HOUSTON COUNTY ONLY)**

**Carla Woodall, Clerk
Houston County, AL**

Pursuant to the May 15, 2020 order of the Alabama Supreme Court, which entrusts the Presiding Circuit Judge to adopt procedures “to protect court employees and other individuals accessing all courts within the circuit,” and having consulted with the Circuit and District Judges of Houston County, the Chairman of the County Commission, the Circuit Clerk, the Sheriff, the District Attorney, and the County Personnel Director, it is **ORDERED** that:

Last week the Alabama Department of Public Health moved Houston County into the Very High Risk Category. The Alabama Department of Public Health provided general guidelines that should be followed by people living in a place that is in the Very High Risk category. While all of the following guidelines do not apply to a work environment, they are being provided here as a courtesy.

- Maintain social distancing in public settings.
- Wear face coverings when social distancing is difficult to maintain.
- Work at home, if possible. If not, keep a six-foot distance from others. Wear face coverings at work when such social distancing is not possible.
- Avoid groups of more than 20 people.
- Avoid all unnecessary travel. If you must travel, avoid crowded areas if possible.
- Takeout, pickup or delivery from restaurants is strongly encouraged rather than dining in.
- Avoid unnecessary visits to hospitals, nursing homes, or other residential care facilities.
- Even when visiting friends or family, wear face coverings when within six feet of people outside your household.
- Hold on-line worship services if possible. When meeting in person, keep six-foot distances between people of different households; consider holding more services for lower attendance, and more spacing between people, at each service.

(Please refer to the Alabama Department of Public Health’s website for the most up to date information.)

Last week, two individuals who work in the Houston County Courthouse tested positive for the COVID 19. Every effort has been made to notify individuals who work at the courthouse who came into close contact with these individuals, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC defines “close contact” as follows: “Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.”

Any individual who entered the courthouse last week should watch for symptoms. Symptoms may appear several days after exposure to the virus. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), symptoms include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. (Please see the CDC website for the most up to date and detailed information.)

If an employee or member of the public develops symptoms, they should see a doctor immediately or self-quarantine for at least 14 days.

If a Houston County Courthouse employee develops symptoms, they should notify their supervisor and SHOULD NOT ENTER THE COURTHOUSE. (If the symptoms develop while at work, the employee should exit the Courthouse immediately.)

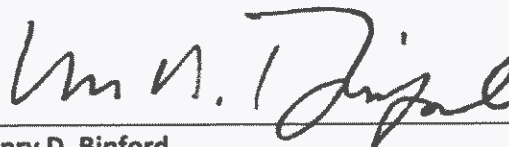
Effective immediately and continuing through July 10, 2020, employees of the Houston County Courthouse are to work from home if at all possible. If this is not possible, employees must

- keep a six-foot distance from others,
- wear face coverings at work until they are at their work stations,
- go directly to their work stations
- use the back stairwell if their health and fitness will allow it, and
- avoid contact with fellow employees unless it is absolutely work related.

Effective immediately and continuing through July 10, 2020, the offices within the Houston County courthouse are closed to the public and all in-person hearings and related matters are suspended with the following exceptions:

- Absentee Voting;
- Probable Cause Determinations for Arrest Warrants by Magistrate;
- Proceedings necessary to protect the constitutional rights of criminal defendants, including bond-related matters and plea agreements for incarcerated individuals;
- Initial appearance hearings (48/72 hour hearings) for adults and juveniles;
- Bond related matters for adult offenders to include motions for bond reduction, bond revocation, setting of bond;
- Protection from Abuse hearings;
- Emergency child custody and protection matter to include cases filed by Department of Human Resources;
- Petitions for temporary injunctive relief in which the Court cannot handle via telephone or technologically;
- Emergency protection matters involving elderly or vulnerable person;
- Proceedings related to the COVID-19 public health emergencies;
- Emergency proceedings as needed by law enforcement and approved by the Presiding Circuit Judge.

Absentee Voting will be conducted in the Lobby of the Houston County Courthouse. Law enforcement personnel seeking probable cause determinations for arrest warrants should report to Room 109 of the Clerk's Office. This Order does not relate to Henry County. This Order remains in place through Friday, July 10, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. unless amended or extended.



Henry D. Binford
Acting Presiding Circuit Judge