

LOWNDES COUNTY PROBATE COURT OPERATING GUIDELINES

On March 14, 2020, Chief Justice Harold Melton issued an Order Declaring Statewide Judicial Emergency pursuant to O.C.G.A. §38-3-61. The Order has been extended three times with modifications, by orders issued on April 6, May 11, and June 12, 2020. On July 10, 2020, Chief Justice Harold Melton issued a Fourth Order Extending Declaration of Statewide Judicial Emergency requesting all Courts issue operating guidelines. Therefore, to ensure that our citizens continue to receive full services of the Probate Court, and to protect the health and safety of all citizens, court staff and those entering our court to conduct business during these unprecedented times, our services will continue pursuant to the Operating Guidelines as provided below:

SCREENING: Upon entering the Courthouse, the security team will ask questions regarding your health and ensure all persons are wearing a mask before entry into the Court.

FACE COVERINGS: All persons visiting the Court to conduct business must wear a mask to cover your mouth, and nose. All parties including Attorneys will be required to wear a mask when entering the Courtroom and during hearing proceedings. Attorneys please ensure your staff, clients, and witnesses are aware of this. If your client/witness/staff does not have a mask, please bring extras, as NO one will be allowed into the Courtroom without a mask

SCHEDULING: All in-person hearings shall be specially set. Hearings are open to the public unless otherwise restricted. The number of attendees may be limited due to the requirements of physical distancing.

SOCIAL DISTANCING: For in-person hearings, social distancing shall apply in the courtroom as well as other areas of the building. When the Courtroom has reached capacity for social distancing, person(s) shall return to their vehicles or outside the Judicial Building while maintaining social distancing while awaiting re-entry.

COURT PROCEEDINGS:

- **MARRIAGE LICENSES:** Applications for Marriage Licenses will be BY **APPOINTMENT ONLY**. To schedule an appointment please call or email the office at probatecourt@lowndescounty.com. Marriage applications are available online and **must** be completed by both parties prior to your scheduled appointment. All requests for certified copies of marriage records **must** be requested online by going to www.lowndescounty.com.

- WEAPONS CARRY LICENSES: Applications for Weapons carry License will be BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. To schedule an appointment please call or email the office at probatecourt@lowndescounty.com. Weapon Carry License applications are available online and must be completed prior to your scheduled appointment.
- Inquiries and filings for Estates, Guardianship and Conservatorship for Minors and Adults, Mental Health, Fireworks Application and all other matters will be BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. To schedule an appointment please call or email the office at probatecourt@lowndescounty.com. Information and forms related to Probate court can be found on our website: <https://georgiacourts.gov/probate/>.
- HEARINGS: Probate Court will continue to conduct essential and non-essential hearings via Cisco Webex video conferencing and in-person hearings at the appropriate time.
- All pleadings must be mailed or delivered to the Court and placed in Probate Court drop box.
- RECORD SEARCHERS: Record Searchers will be allowed into the Court BY APPOINTMENT ONLY.

All individuals visiting the Courthouse should follow the recommendations of the Center for Disease control and the Georgia Department of Public Health. Please refrain from coming to the Courthouse if you have a fever or symptoms of respiratory illness or have been exposed to a person with coronavirus, flu, or any other transmittable disease.

These rules are in place to provide an efficient flow for the maximum number of applicants per day, while keeping everyone as safe as possible. I would like to thank you for your continued patience and understanding as we work together during these unprecedented times.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Carter", written over a horizontal line.

Judge, Probate Court
Lowndes County Georgia