

IN THE GENERAL SESSIONS COURT FOR DAVIDSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE
CRIMINAL AND CIVIL DIVISION

2020 DEC -7 AM 11:58

CRIMINAL COURT

RE: ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER ALLOWING ADMISSION INTO THE
COURTROOM OF SUPPORT PERSONS

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

The Tennessee Supreme Court in its COVID-19 Pandemic Order dated April 24, 2020, instructed the presiding judge in each judicial district, in coordination with the designated judge of the general sessions court within each judicial district to develop a comprehensive written plan to gradually begin conducting in-person court proceedings in some non-emergency matters.

The comprehensive Re-Opening written plan for courts in the 20th Judicial District, which has been approved by the Tennessee Supreme Court, expressly states that support persons (family/friends of litigants/witnesses) shall be permitted in the courtroom only at the discretion of the judge.

Accordingly, the General Sessions Court hereby adopts a protocol whereby support persons may request permission at the discretion of the judge presiding over a particular court proceeding to be permitted in the courtroom. Said protocol is set forth in Exhibit 1 hereto and is hereby adopted and incorporated by reference.

This protocol shall remain in effect until revoked, modified, suspended or superseded by further court order whether that be by local order or by order of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

IT IS SO ORDERED this 7th day of December, 2020.

Presiding Judge Sam Coleman
Division 10

PROTOCOL FOR SUPPORT PERSON TO REQUEST PERMISSION TO ATTEND A COURT PROCEEDING

During the COVID-19 pandemic, only those members of the public who are necessary to conduct business are generally admitted to the courthouse. Be that as it may, the Metropolitan General Sessions Court can allow limited family members or friends to attend a court hearing in support of a defendant, victim, litigant or witness. However, permission to attend is entirely within the discretion of the judge presiding over that court proceeding.

In order to provide a uniform method whereby support persons can apply and possibly be granted permission in advance to attend a court hearing, the following protocol is adopted by the Court.

Support person is defined as family member or friend.

An application form shall be posted on the General Sessions Court website, the Criminal Court Clerk's website, and the General Sessions Civil Court Clerk's website designated SUPPORT PERSON APPLICATION. This Protocol shall also be posted on these same websites.

Any person seeking permission to attend an in-person hearing as a support person pursuant to this protocol shall use said form exclusively to make such application.

When completed in full, the form should be emailed to supportperson@jnsnashville.gov. If the support person is not able to email the form, he/she should mail or deliver the form to the Criminal Court Clerk or the General Sessions Civil Court Clerk. Upon receipt of the form by the Clerk, the Clerk's Office shall immediately scan and email the form to supportperson@jnsnashville.gov. It is the intention of the Court that the foregoing email address inbox be the central repository for all requests.

The application form must arrive in the aforementioned email inbox no later than 24 hours before the scheduled hearing to ensure there is enough time to process the request. Applications which arrive later than the deadline may not get processed in time.

The application form will then be presented to the judge by the Court Administration Office. The judge will decide whether to approve or deny the request. An Order will be entered setting forth the determination. A copy of the Support Person Application will be attached to the Order.

A copy of the Order and attachment will immediately be emailed by the Court Administration Office to the applicant at the email address provided by the applicant. The original Order and application shall remain in the custody of the Court Administration Office.

If the application is approved, the support person should print out a copy of the Order and attachment (i.e., application) and bring it with them to the courthouse to ensure admittance to the building and the courtroom.

SUPPORT PERSON APPLICATION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, if permission is being sought by a family member or friend to attend a particular court hearing in support of a defendant, victim, litigant or witness, fill out this form and either email it supportperson@jnsnashville.gov or deliver it to the Clerk of the court. The judge who will be sitting/presiding over the hearing will review the application. **It must be received by the Court at least 24 hours before the scheduled hearing.** An Order approving or denying the application will be emailed to the applicant. If approved, the support person must bring a copy of the approval Order and this application with them to the courthouse.

Person Seeking Approval to Attend Hearing:

Full Name

E-Mail Address (Must Be Provided)

Family Member Friend (Check One)

Phone Number (Must Be Provided)

Name of Person You Are There to Support: _____

(Must be a defendant, victim, litigant or witness)

Type of Hearing: Criminal _____
(Check One) Civil _____

Case or Docket No. _____
(If Known)

Date of Hearing: _____

Courtroom Number: _____

Name of Judge Presiding Over Hearing: _____

NOTE: You can determine which Judge is scheduled to preside in any given Courtroom for any given week by reviewing the General Sessions Courtroom Docket Schedule which is posted on the General Sessions Court website. Visit gscourt.nashville.gov and under the General Information tab, click on Court Schedule and then open the PDF Docket Schedule. Otherwise, you may contact the Criminal Court Clerk (615-862-5601) or Civil Court Clerk (615-862-5195) to find out which Judge is presiding in any given Courtroom for any particular day.