



**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
TOWALIGA JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
STATE OF GEORGIA**

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Emergency Action Plan for VWAP Services Towaliga Judicial Circuit Office of District Attorney

Introduction

On March 14, 2020, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-61, the Honorable Justice Harold D. Melton, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Georgia, declared a Statewide Judicial Emergency. The Statewide Judicial Emergency shall terminate on April 13, 2020, at 11:59 p.m., unless otherwise extended.

During the Statewide Judicial Emergency, to the extent feasible, courts should remain open to address essential functions, and in particular, courts should give priority to matters necessary to protect health, safety, and liberty of individuals. Essential functions are subject to interpretation; however, some matters that fall into the essential function category are: (1) where an immediate liberty or safety concern is present requiring the attention of the court as soon as the court is available; (2) criminal court search warrants, arrest warrants, initial appearances, and bond reviews; (3) domestic abuse temporary protective orders and restraining orders; (4) juvenile court delinquency detention hearings and emergency removal matters; and (5) mental health commitment hearings.

Pursuant to OCGA § 38-3-62, during the period of this Order, Chief Justice Melton hereby suspends, tolls, extends, and otherwise grants relief from any deadlines or other time schedules or filing requirements imposed by otherwise applicable statutes, rules, regulations, or court orders, whether in civil or criminal cases or administrative matters, including, but not limited to any: (1) statute of limitation; (2) time within which to issue a warrant; (3) time within which to try a case for which a demand for speedy trial has been filed; (4) time within which to hold a commitment hearing; (5) deadline or other schedule regarding the detention of a juvenile; (6) time within which to return a bill of indictment or an accusation or to bring a matter before a grand jury; (7) time within which to file a writ of habeas corpus; (8) time within which discovery or any aspect thereof is to be completed; (9) time within which to serve a party; (10) time within which to appeal or to seek the right to appeal any order, ruling, or other determination; and (11) such other legal proceedings as determined to be necessary by the authorized judicial official.



VWAP Services

As crimes against persons and arrests continue to take place, advocates maintain a responsibility to keep victims abreast of their rights, the criminal justice process, and available resources in their community to assist with their individual needs. Victims maintain a constitutional right to be heard and their opinions regarding release taken under consideration. Now, more than ever, notification of criminal justice events, and the postponement of such events, is key to providing essential services to victims of crime.

Action Plan

In order to provide victims mandated service under O.C.G.A. 17-17-1, et seq. and the Georgia Constitution Article I, Section I, while protecting the health, safety, and liberty of all citizens, the Office of the District Attorney, Towaliga Judicial Circuit has instituted the following plan of action for providing remote services to victims of crime. Our goal is to remain connected while keeping both advocates and victims safe.

1. Office staff in our three counties, Butts, Lamar & Monroe, are working with reduced staff in the office to meet safe distancing guidelines and teleworking as directed. All offices are closed to the public and are following published national, state, and local guidelines.
2. VWAP staff have notified victims of court date postponements and will continue to keep them updated via phone and mail notifications.
3. Contact has been made with our partner service providers such as domestic violence shelters and child advocacy centers to become familiar with their current plans of action during the COVID 19 outbreak. This information is available to all staff advocates & will be posted on social media sites.
4. In the case of mandatory hearings, victims/family members have been notified and will be provided with updates, procedures regarding these court proceedings.
5. Advocates continue to work closely with ADAs on assigned cases in order to meet victim notifications as required regarding release, consideration of bond, etc and all case updates per the Crime Victims' Bill of Rights and Constitutional amendments.

For assistance with domestic violence & emergency shelter, contact:

Haven House 770-957-9229 (serving Butts, Lamar)

Crisis Line & Safe House 478-745-9292 (serving Monroe)

In all emergencies & to report crime, including domestic violence and child abuse incidents, call 911.

For more information regarding victim rights & services, contact 470-765-9002 or lbunn@pacga.org.