

# VIRTUAL COURT



**GEORGIA**  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

## MISSION

To protect Georgians by operating secure facilities and providing opportunities for offender rehabilitation.

**Tyrone Oliver**, Commissioner

**Alan Watson**, Chief of Staff

**Ahmed Holt**, Assistant Commissioner Facilities Divisions

The Georgia Department of Corrections Court Services team handles the scheduling of Court Production Orders, Video Hearing Requests, and Teleconferencing. In an effort to reduce transport costs and increase officer safety, the Department of Corrections partnered with the Augusta Judicial Circuit in 2018 to pilot the use of video conferencing to conduct hearings involving state inmates. As of June 2019, the Georgia Department of Corrections had video conferencing equipment installed in all state prisons. Along with handling Court Production Orders and Video Hearings, the Court Services team assists the Public Defender's Office in scheduling telephone calls with their clients in State custody through Teleconference.

## VIDEO HEARINGS

### TYPES OF HEARINGS

- Arraignments, Calendar Call, Depositions, Habeas, Motions, Plea, Sentencing, Probation Revocation, Status Hearings, and Witness

### BENEFITS

- Reduces the security risk of having to transport an inmate
- Saves money for the State and Counties in eliminating transports and housing costs
- Allows security staff to focus on assigned duties instead of being on the road
- Hearings are completed in less time
- Attorneys can have confidential, non-recorded calls with their clients through teleconference eliminating travel to a facility

### PROCESS

- The Judicial Circuit completes and submits a video hearing request to [video.hearing@gdc.ga.gov](mailto:video.hearing@gdc.ga.gov) within seven business days of the hearing date.
  - The Court ensures a meeting number or call
  - Once a request is submitted, Court Services verifies the date, and time to ensure no conflicts
  - The Judicial Circuit receives a confirmation email if GDC can comply with the hearing request, or will be contacted if there is a conflict to schedule a different date/time
- Any documentation that the offender will need for the court hearing will be sent by the Judicial Circuit, via email, to [video.hearing@gdc.ga.gov](mailto:video.hearing@gdc.ga.gov) within 72-hours of the hearing date
  - A GDC staff member will provide a printed copy of the documentation to the offender before the court hearing for the offender's review.
  - During the hearing a GDC staff member will either have the documents printed and signed or have the offender electronically sign the court document through DocuSign
- During the hearing, if the offender needs to speak with their attorney privately, there will be a designated area to receive a confidential, non-recorded, phone call from their attorney. The phone number for the attorney to call will be announced through the video hearing by a GDC staff member

## LEGAL CONFERENCE

Legal conference was created to support the Public Defender's offices who are involved with video hearings and need to speak with their clients before court.

### BENEFITS

- Reduces travel time and expenses for Public Defenders to speak with their clients housed at state facilities
- Allows Attorneys and their clients to have confidential/non-recorded calls
- Streamlined process of requesting a date/time to speak with clients

### PROCESS

- **STEP 1:** Attorney will email a copy of their bar card and photo ID to [legalconference.request@gdc.ga.gov](mailto:legalconference.request@gdc.ga.gov)
- **STEP 2:** Attorney will send request to above email with Entry of Appearance including Case #, Memo on Letterhead including Offender's Name, GDC Number, Facility, Date/Time of call. (Give at least 72-hour notice)
- **STEP 3:** Once request is received and Attorney credentials are verified, GDC will send confirmation email if the facility can or can not comply. If the facility can comply instructions will be sent with where to call.

## REGIONS

### NORTH

- Appalachian
- Atlanta
- Augusta
- Bell-Forsyth
- Blue Ridge
- Cherokee
- Cobb
- Conasauga
- Gwinnett
- Lookout Mountain
- Mountain
- Northern
- Northeastern
- Ocmulgee
- Piedmont
- Rome
- Toombs

### SOUTHEAST

- Alapaha
- Alcovy
- Atlantic
- Brunswick
- Clayton
- Dublin
- Griffin
- Oconee
- Rockdale
- Stone Mountain
- Eastern
- Middle
- Ogeechee
- Towaliga
- Waycross
- Western

### SOUTHWEST

- Chattahoochee
- Cordele
- Coweta
- Dougherty
- Douglas
- Enotah
- Flint
- Houston
- Macon
- Pataula
- Paulding
- Southern
- South Georgia
- Southerwestern
- Tallapoosa
- Tifton