

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



**Standard Operating Procedures**

**Policy Name:** Court Services: Legal Conference

**Policy Number:** 222.14

**Effective Date:** 8/22/2023

**Page Number:** 1 of 7

**Authority:**  
Commissioner

**Originating Division:**  
Facilities Division

**Access Listing:**  
Level I: All Access

**I. Introduction and Summary:**

The purpose of Legal Conference is to provide Attorneys the ability to confidentially communicate with an Offender, in custody with the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC), without having to produce the Offender for an in-person meeting. The State Prisons will comply with these requests and produce the Offender for Legal Conferences as directed by Court Services.

**II. Authority:**

- A. Georgia Uniform Superior Court Rule: 9.2., Video Conferencing.
- B. GDC Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): 103.63 American with Disabilities Act (ADA), Title II Provisions, 222.05 Court Productions, 222.13 Court Services Video Hearings, and 227.03 Access to Courts.

**III. Definitions:**

- A. **Attorney** - An Attorney of record, or any other Attorney licensed to practice in State or United States Courts, Court of Appeals, or the Supreme Courts with whom the Offender has, or is attempting to establish, an Attorney-client relationship.
- B. **Designated Staff** - Facility staff member that has completed Legal Conference training provided by Court Services.
- C. **Legal Conference** - An approved interaction between an Attorney and their client either by video conferencing or telephone.
- D. **Legal Conference Room** - An area that has been inspected and approved by Court Services for utilization of confidential Legal Conferences.
- E. **Offender** - For purposes of this SOP, the word Offender is meant as a generic term to encompass all Offenders and detainees in the custody of GDC.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



**Standard Operating Procedures**

**Policy Name:** Court Services: Legal Conference

**Policy Number:** 222.14

**Effective Date:** 8/22/2023

**Page Number:** 2 of 7

**Authority:**  
Commissioner

**Originating Division:**  
Facilities Division

**Access Listing:**  
Level I: All Access

**IV. Statement of Policy and Applicable Procedures:**

A. Legal Conference Request Process:

1. An Attorney will submit a Legal Conference Request Form (Attachment 1).
2. Out of State Attorney will use Attachment 2.
3. A copy of their Bar Card, and a copy of approved photo identification is to be submitted to Court Services [Legalconference.request@gdc.ga.gov](mailto:Legalconference.request@gdc.ga.gov).
4. This request must be submitted by the Attorney at least three (3) business days prior to the requested Legal Conference date:
  - a. If a Legal Conference request is sent directly to a facility.
  - b. The facility is contacted by an Attorney to set up a Legal Conference.
  - c. The facility should immediately notify Court Services; and
  - d. Facilities are to direct any questions to Court Services at [Legalconference.request@gdc.ga.gov](mailto:Legalconference.request@gdc.ga.gov).
5. The request will specify the type of contact being requested (phone or video).
6. If requesting for a video conference:
  - a. The Attorney will note an approved reason for needing the Legal Conference to be by video.
    - i. Needing to review/complete paperwork.
    - ii. Reviewing discovery.
    - iii. Reviewing evidence; and

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



**Standard Operating Procedures**

**Policy Name:** Court Services: Legal Conference

**Policy Number:** 222.14

**Effective Date:** 8/22/2023

**Page Number:** 3 of 7

**Authority:**  
Commissioner

**Originating Division:**  
Facilities Division

**Access Listing:**  
Level I: All Access

- iv. Will prevent a production order.
- 7. Once a request for a Legal Conference is submitted, Court Services will verify the Attorney's credentials.
- 8. Court Services will determine the type of Legal Conference being requested.
  - a. Video Calls will be forwarded to [video.hearing@gdc.ga.gov](mailto:video.hearing@gdc.ga.gov); and
  - b. Video Court Processes will be followed.
  - c. Telephone Calls will be scheduled per this policy; and
  - d. Any in person Legal Conference requests will be sent to the prison to schedule.
- 9. Once a request for a video hearing is submitted, Court Services will verify with the court calendar in SCRIBE to ensure:
  - a. There are no conflicts with the requested date and time.
- 10. If no conflicts are found, the Legal Conference request will be entered into SCRIBE by Court Services, which will notify the facility, where the Offender is housed, that a Legal Conference has been scheduled.
  - a. To ensure the facility is informed of all Legal Conferences scheduled.
  - b. Facility staff are to check the Scribe Legal Conference Calendar daily after three (3) p.m.
  - c. Video call requests will be sent to the facility Video Hearings point of contact.
  - d. If an Offender is no longer at that facility and is scheduled for a Legal Conference, the facility will notify Court Services immediately.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



**Standard Operating Procedures**

**Policy Name:** Court Services: Legal Conference

**Policy Number:** 222.14

**Effective Date:** 8/22/2023

**Page Number:** 4 of 7

**Authority:**  
Commissioner

**Originating Division:**  
Facilities Division

**Access Listing:**  
Level I: All Access

- e. Court Services will send an email sent back to the requesting Attorney confirming:
    - i. The Legal Conference has been Scheduled; and
    - ii. That GDC will comply with producing the Offender at the designated date and time.
  - f. Staff will create a Scribe Call out for the requested Offenders.
  - g. Facilities will ensure that reasonable accommodations are made for any persons with a disability in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
    - i. If an Offender needs special services, or interpretative services, Court Services will be notified.
11. If there is a conflict, Court Services will notify the requesting Attorney and provide an alternate date and time.
- a. The facility is to make accommodations for any Legal Conference scheduled.
  - b. If there is a conflict on the facility side (emergency, audits, events, etc.) accommodations will be made by the Warden.
  - c. The scheduled Legal Conference is to be handled without interruption; and
  - d. If accommodations cannot be made, Court Services will be notified by the Warden.
- B. Day of Legal Conference:
- 1. Each GDC Facility will have a Designated Staff member responsible for the Legal Conference, whether by video or phone.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



**Standard Operating Procedures**

**Policy Name:** Court Services: Legal Conference

**Policy Number:** 222.14

**Effective Date:** 8/22/2023

**Page Number:** 5 of 7

**Authority:**  
Commissioner

**Originating Division:**  
Facilities Division

**Access Listing:**  
Level I: All Access

- a. Staff will verify that the Offender is still housed at their facility.
  - b. Facility staff will ensure the Offender is in the designated waiting area for the Legal Conference at least thirty (30) minutes prior to the scheduled time; and
  - c. If the Offender is no longer at that facility, the Designated Staff notify Court Services immediately.
2. Paperwork for the Legal Conference:
- a. Facility staff need to print a copy of the paperwork.
  - b. Provide a copy to the Offender.
  - c. If signature is required; facility staff will be provided instructions by Court Services on how to return the signed copies.
3. Staff will coordinate with Security:
- a. To ensure the Offender is made available for the Legal Conference.
  - b. Escorted to the designated Legal Conference Room thirty (30) minutes prior to the scheduled call time.
4. At the scheduled time of the legal telephone conference:
- a. Staff will call the Attorney from a secure phone line on the conference call phone number provided by Court Services; and
  - b. Verify they are speaking with the approved caller before handing the phone to the Offender.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



**Standard Operating Procedures**

**Policy Name:** Court Services: Legal Conference

**Policy Number:** 222.14

**Effective Date:** 8/22/2023

**Page Number:** 6 of 7

**Authority:**  
Commissioner

**Originating Division:**  
Facilities Division

**Access Listing:**  
Level I: All Access

5. For a Video Legal Conference staff.
  - a. Staff will visually inspect the Offender for the following:
    - i. Ensure Offender is clean.
    - ii. Well groomed; and
    - iii. Uniform is neat and pressed.
  - b. If available, the Offender will be provided wireless headsets.
  - c. If the staff are unable to contact the Attorney at the time of the call, the staff will continue to call the Attorney.
    - i. Either by phone or video, as directed.
    - ii. Up to 10 minutes after the scheduled call time.
    - iii. If the staff are still unable to make a connection, Court Services will be notified and will provide further instructions.
  - d. Once the Legal Conference is connected.
    - i. Staff will remain outside of the Legal Conference Room to ensure confidentiality; and
    - ii. Reduce any outside noise during the call.
6. All Legal Conferences will be scheduled for thirty (30) minutes; unless, otherwise requested by the Attorney prior to the call.
  - a. If a call lasts longer than the timeframe scheduled in SCRIBE.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



**Standard Operating Procedures**

**Policy Name:** Court Services: Legal Conference

**Policy Number:** 222.14

**Effective Date:** 8/22/2023

**Page Number:** 7 of 7

**Authority:**  
Commissioner

**Originating Division:**  
Facilities Division

**Access Listing:**  
Level I: All Access

- b. The staff will verify with the Attorney a remaining timeframe needed to complete the call.
  - c. If the facility can accommodate the call continuing past the scheduled time, the call should be allowed to continue; and
  - d. If the facility is unable to accommodate the call, the facility will advise the Attorney to reschedule the call through Court Services.
7. In the event of an emergency that will prevent the Offender from being brought to the Legal Conference Room on time, the facility staff will contact Court Services immediately.
- a. Emergency situations include but are not limited to:
    - i. Emergency Count.
    - ii. Lockdown; and
    - iii. Inclement weather.
8. Once the Legal Conference has concluded, the Offender will be escorted back to their assigned area.

**V. Attachments:**

Attachment 1: Attorney Legal Conference Request

Attachment 2: Out-of-State Supplemental Form

**VI. Record Retention of Forms Relevant to this Policy:**

Upon completion Attachments 1 and 2 shall be placed in the Offender's documents in SCRIBE and retained according to the official retention schedule for Offender institutional files.