



– *General Information for State Finals Spectators* –

Trial Site and Security Information

The entrance of the Gwinnett Justice Center is a three-story atrium lobby. The security stations are located on the first floor in the main lobby area, just inside the main doors to the facility. Each person entering the building must go through one of the metal detectors/X-ray machines. These machines take up most of the lobby space, so once your team and spectators have gone through the security checkpoint, please direct everyone to congregate in the public lobby area on the far side of the glass doors on the 1st, 2nd or 3rd floors. Use the escalator to reach the 2nd and 3rd floors. **Teams SHOULD NOT congregate in the main lobby area (near the escalators) on the 1st floor.**

Security at the courthouse is a serious matter. People who crack jokes about what they may or may not be carrying will delay the procedure, embarrass the prankster, and may lead to action by the Sheriff's Department or the Trial Coordinators to exclude such persons from the courthouse, thus prohibiting their participation in the program. Please check purses and other bags before entering the court site to insure that you (or any member of your team) are not carrying a weapon of any kind.

Cameras have been cleared for admission to the courtrooms for this event. Please inform your parents and other spectators, that if they plan to bring video or camera equipment, that they will be asked to stay to the rear of the security lines in order to allow teams, teachers and attorney coaches to move through the security check points first. The security guards at the courthouse have been asked to prioritize the lines in this manner, and the trial coordinators believe that team members and coaches should have first priority in moving through the checkpoints. Additionally, security personnel may require that cell phones be turned on to confirm that they are in working order.

The following items may not be brought through security checkpoints:

- ◆ Weapons of any kind (including pocket knives and scissors)
- ◆ Sharp metal objects (including nail files, etc.)

As always, your patience and cooperation during this process will be greatly appreciated!

Competition Schedule

All teams will participate in **two preliminary Rounds** during the State Finals Competition. An **Awards Ceremony** will be held at approximately 4:00 PM on Saturday in the auditorium at the Justice Center. Here,

we will recognize the District Champion teams, hand out the “Outstanding Witness” and “Outstanding Attorney” Awards for the first two Rounds, recognize the Court Artist Regional and State Champions and induct the 2017 Law Academy class. We will also present the Professionalism Award to the team selected by the competing teams. The final part of the Awards Ceremony will be the announcement of the two Finalist teams. The Awards Ceremony should last approximately 35 to 45 minutes.

Seating in Courtrooms

Generally, the courtrooms at the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center will be able to accommodate all observers during Rounds.

In all courtrooms, the witnesses will sit on the first bench, just outside the bar, and directly behind their team’s counsel table. All spectators, including coaches, must sit “outside the bar” and behind the witnesses. No spectator or coach may communicate in any way with a competition team member (attorney, witness or timekeeper) while a trial Round is in progress or during any recess called during a Round.

No one may sit in the jury box except the timekeepers and the Evaluators. Timekeepers should sit on the first row of the jury box, on the end closest to the Prosecution/Plaintiff table and away from the Evaluators.

As a general guideline, spectators should use the seats directly behind their team’s counsel table first so that it is clear which spectators are associated with which team. However, it is perfectly acceptable for overflow spectators to sit on “the other” side of the courtroom, if extra seating space is needed and available.

The Judging Panel Coordinator does not take into account the size of a team or the number of spectators associated with a team when placing teams in courtrooms for competition Rounds. Patience and generosity are greatly appreciated if circumstances place your team in a courtroom with limited seating.

Spectators in a Trial Round

In essence, a mock trial competition Round is a performance. When an audience views a play or a musical concert, they are required to display appropriate performance etiquette and we expect all spectators at our State Competition to display appropriate performance etiquette, as well. Your students have worked very hard to perfect their presentation and noise and movement from the gallery can be distracting during the course of a round. In addition, noise and movement from the gallery may distract Judging Panel members who should be intently watching and evaluating your team’s performance.

Therefore, we request that all spectators (including coaches) adhere to “appropriate performance etiquette” for a mock trial round as follows:

- Spectators should silence all electronic devices prior to the beginning of the round.
- Spectators should NOT accept phone calls, make calls or send text messages, etc., or use any electronic device (including video games) inside the courtroom during a round.

- Spectators should refrain from talking during a round.
- Once a round begins, spectators should keep their seat until the round concludes.
- If a spectator needs to exit the courtroom, s/he should do so in an unobtrusive manner and should WAIT until a break in the action before exiting (i.e. between witnesses or between portions of the trial).
- Spectators should only re-enter a courtroom during a break in the action (unless a presiding judge prohibits re-entry).
- Spectators awaiting the end of the round in the hallway should keep the noise level low – the doors to the courtroom are not soundproof.
- Small children, food and drink should never be brought into a courtroom.

No spectator may wear or carry any item that identifies the school with which you are associated, with the exception of a letter code badge. All competition team members must wear the adhesive letter code badge provided in the team's registration packet.

Videotaping Trial Rounds

No team is guaranteed that it will be allowed to video a trial Round. Videotaping a trial Round is governed by Rule 23. An opponent may decline to allow videotaping during the Round or a Presiding Judge may choose to restrict both teams in a Round from taping the performances. Additionally, depending on circumstances that might arise before or during a given level of the competition, the State Mock Trial Office and/or Rules Subcommittee Chair have the authority to restrict videotaping in any courtroom at any level of the competition. Also note that Rule 21 (g) and (h) prohibits the use of all electronic equipment in a courtroom during a trial Round, this includes any equipment that can record and/or stream video images.

All teams are required to submit a list of anyone planning to bring video equipment to the courthouse during the State Competition. The list must be submitted by email or fax to the Mock Trial Office by Friday, 7 March. Persons not on the list will not be allowed to bring in video equipment.

The only video equipment allowed at state this year must have removable storage media (a tape or a card). All storage media containing Round footage must be submitted to the designated trial coordinator in the jury assembly room (2nd floor) at the end of each preliminary Round on Saturday. Failure to follow these instructions could result in a team being denied the opportunity to video during a round and/or in a penalty being assessed under Rule 35. Storage media will be returned to the teacher coach by mail the week after State. All storage media must be labeled with the school name or team code.

Pre-Competition Weather and Other Emergencies

March weather can be unpredictable and a postponement of the state tournament due to extreme weather conditions is possible. If bad weather threatens, the Mock Trial office will strive to keep the primary Teacher Coach of all affected teams as up-to-date on the decision making process as possible. The Mock Trial office will make a decision on any weather-related postponement in consultation with the Court

Administrator's and Sheriff's Department representatives at the court site. If the State tournament is postponed due to weather, the tournament will be rescheduled for the next available weekend. No State tournament will be held after the last weekend in March. Any team unable to compete in a re-scheduled State tournament will forfeit its place in the tournament with no refund of any team registration fee and will not be replaced. The State tournament will move forward with the remaining teams.

All weather-related postponements will be carried on the HSMT office voicemail (404/527-8779 or 800/334-6865, ext. 779), the Mock Trial's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/GeorgiaMockTrial) and, if possible, on the HSMT website. Staff will also attempt to send text messages to the primary Teacher Coach from each team with updates.