

COVID-19 Operating Plan for Fort Bend County Justice Court, Precinct One, Place One

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the buildings housing the courts, the courts of Fort Bend County Justice Court, Pct 1, PI 1 will implement the following protective measures:

Justice Court, Pct. 1, PI 1 is in a stand-alone building. The building is not shared with any other departments or personnel. The building is small and the volume of persons coming into the building is also small. The Court consists of the Judge and 6 staff members.

General

1. The Court will comply with the Emergency Orders issued by the Supreme Court of Texas and Court of Criminal Appeals, including conducting in-person proceedings according to the guidance issued by the Office of Court Administration regarding social distancing, maximum group size, and other restrictions and precautions.
2. The Court will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. The judge will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the county. The Court will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 3, 2020

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judges and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: Every person that enters the building where the court is housed shall be screened by a person that is provided by Fort Bend County. That person will inquire into factors that indicate a person may have been exposed to COVID-19, will have their temperature taken and will sign in on a log book.
3. The judge or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100°F, or with new or worsening signs or symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea, or having known close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19 will not be permitted to enter the building and should seek medical advice.
4. The judge and court staff will be required to wear face coverings while away from their work station, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: The staff are practicing social distancing measures. They have their workstations separated by 6 or more feet, or have a partition between their workstations. Additionally, each staff member is required to wear a face covering at any time they leave their workstation. Each workstation is provided hand sanitizer, as are

other locations, including each location where there is interaction with the public, and at the entrance to the building.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: All future dockets are set to be conducted virtually, except for pre-existing dockets, where the participants have indicated an inability to connect to the virtual courtroom. In those cases, the participants will be in the courtroom, where social distancing will be ensured by markers indicating where occupants must stand or sit. These hearings will not be conducted until after June 1, 2020. These dockets will consist of a small number of cases to allow the participants to have their case heard promptly and leave the court building within a few minutes.

Vulnerable Populations

1. Individuals who are over age 65 and individuals with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy are considered to be vulnerable populations.
2. The judge will include information on orders setting hearings, dockets notices, and in other communications notifying individuals who are in vulnerable populations of the ability to contact the court to identify themselves as a vulnerable individual and receive accommodations. A notice with this information will be posted on the courts' websites and in conspicuous locations around the court building.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by conducting only virtual hearings, except where a participant cannot attend virtually. In these cases, a docket will be set for them to appear in person, while social distancing and meeting other safety protocol as set forth herein, or as set forth by future direction of the local health authority.

Social Distancing

1. All persons not from the same household who are permitted in the court building will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet.
2. There are no public common areas, other than the lobby to the building, which has been marked to ensure social distancing.
3. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff and the court bailiff. The courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating.

4. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, clerk, and bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building and tissues place throughout the building.
2. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations in building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, a screener provided by Fort Bend County will ask the individuals if they are feeling feverish; have a cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing; or have been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions will be refused admittance to the court building.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, a screener will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100°F will be refused admittance to the court building.
3. Individuals entering the court building will be strongly encouraged to wear personal protective equipment, including the equipment prescribed by the local health authority and the county.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be strongly encouraged to wear face coverings at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering, they may request a disposable face mask. Face coverings will be provided if available.
3. Court functions have been streamlined to insure no one is in the building for more than an hour. Dockets have been reset and/or reduced. Space in the building lobby only accommodates 11 persons while social distancing, thus getting their cases resolved can be accomplished in a matter of minutes.

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every evening or as further established by the local health authority and county facilities operations hours. Areas where visitors conduct business shall be cleaned at least hourly.
2. County Facilities has provided the building cleaning staff cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.

3. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment by their supervisors or by the county department to whom they report.

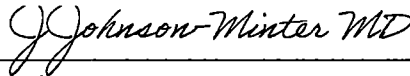
In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority, documentation of which is attached to this plan.

Date: 5/15/2020



Judge Gary Janssen
Justice of the Peace, Pct. 1, Place 1

Approved by Local Health Authority:



Dr. Jacquelyn Minter
Director, Dept. of Health and Human Services