

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Gillespie County Judiciary

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 **Gillespie County** will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. All judges 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. All judges will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. The local administrative district judge will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and the county judge and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the county.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 1, 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: temperature will be taken daily upon arrival, employees will immediately notify a judge if they have exhibited any of the signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or have traveled outside of Gillespie County.
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.0°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, nausea, vomiting, joint pain, 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. Judges and court staff will be required to practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time. Court staff will be required to wear appropriate face covering when dealing with the public or entering a court room.
5. Protective Measures: temperatures are taken daily upon arrival, hand sanitizer will be readily available, Plexiglass screens are installed for judge and court staff in the court room, gloves are available for all employees handling documents or screening the public, face coverings are available for all staff, social distancing will be enforced, work stations and court rooms will be sanitized regularly.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Where two or more courts operate with a common foyer, scheduling will be used to minimize the number of people in the common area. Courtroom occupancy limits have been assigned to each court room gallery and said limits will be enforced. Courts will schedule or accommodate vulnerable population individuals to minimize risks of exposure. Persons waiting or loitering in common areas will be encouraged to wait outside. Courts may use sign-in sheets with contact information to facilitate allowing parties to wait in their vehicles or other areas outside of the court until their case is called.
2. District Courts and CCAL will set their larger out of custody arraignment/pretrial dockets that exceed the respective Courthouse Courtroom capacity at an alternative location. At this time a suitable alternate location has not been identified.

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. Each 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 (a copy of which is attached).
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by rescheduling, priority scheduling, zoom and telephonic hearings..

Social Distancing

1. All persons not from the same household who are permitted in the court room will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet.
2. Each restroom has been evaluated to determine the appropriate capacity to ensure social distancing and the maximum capacity has been posted on each restroom door.
3. Public common areas, including break-rooms and snack-rooms, have been closed to the public with the exception of those hallways and areas that must be open to the public for other county business per the county's guidelines.

Gallery

4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom has been determined and posted. Gallery occupancy limits will be enforced. The occupancy of the courtroom will be monitored for social distancing and be enforced by court staff.

5. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row and includes social distancing on rows in use.

Well

6. In each courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk, court reporter, and bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space. Social distancing will be enforced. Social distancing between attorneys and their clients will be enforced.
7. Plexiglass guards are installed to protect staff and parties.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the court rooms, outside of elevators on each floor, outside of each courtroom, and outside of bathrooms. Hand sanitizer will be located in the well of the court room.
2. Tissues have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, on the judges' benches, and in the hallways.
3. A "How to put on and remove a face mask" flyer has been posted in locations on each floor of the court building.
4. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations on each floor of the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the courtroom, security or court staff will ask the individuals by questionnaire if they are feeling feverish; have a cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing, joint pain, muscle aches, have been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19, have recently lost sense of smell or taste, or have diarrhea or nausea. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions will be refused admittance to the courtroom and asked to leave the building.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court room, security or court staff will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equal or exceed 100.0°F will be refused admittance to the courtroom and asked to leave the building.
3. Inmates being transported from the jail to the court building will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and have their temperature taken prior to transport. Inmates with symptoms or a temperature equal to or above 100.0F will not be transported to the court building.
4. Staff whom are screening individuals entering the court room will be provided personal protective equipment, including face covering, and gloves.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court room will be required to wear face coverings at all times.

2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings or masks with them, but if the individual does not have a face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided.

Cleaning

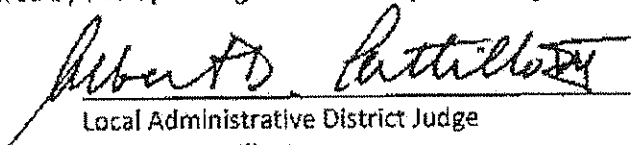
1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every twelve hours. Court rooms will be cleaned daily.
2. Court building cleaning staff or court staff will sanitize the courtrooms between every hearing, between morning and afternoon proceedings, and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
3. Court building cleaning staff will be provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
4. Court building cleaning staff will be trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

Other

1. Judges and court staff will wear face masks in the court room except when protected by plexiglass shield.
2. Plexiglass shields will be installed at the bench and each work station including counsel tables.
3. Markings on the floor demarcate social distancing.
4. Benches in gallery are marked to enforce social distancing.

I have conferred with all Judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority which for Gillespie County, Texas is Dr. Lillian Ringsdorf, the head of the Region 8 DSHS Office in San Antonio, Texas, and the local infection prevention person at Hill Country Memorial Hospital and the county judge, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/29/2020


Local Administrative District Judge
Albert D. Pattillo, III

Approved/Date
 5/29/20
Mark Stroehrer, Gillespie County Judge

Christopher G. Nevins, Gillespie County Court at Law Judge

Dr. Lillian Ringsdorf
Region 8 DSHS, San Antonio, Texas

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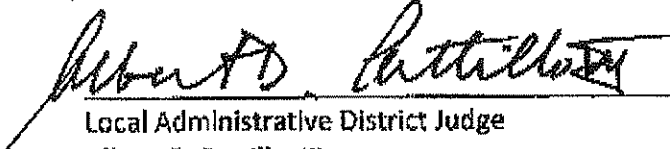
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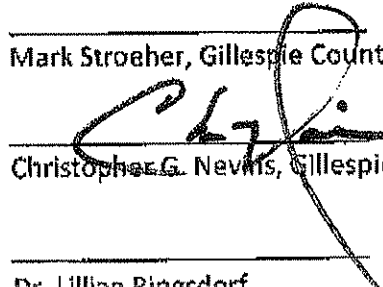
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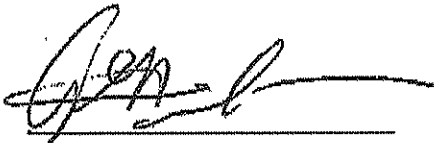

Local Administrative District Judge
Albert D. Pattillo, III

Approved/Date:

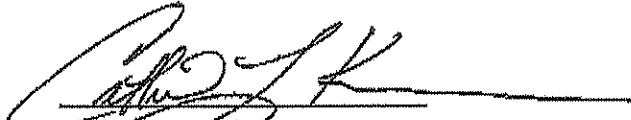

Mark Stroehrer, Gillespie County Judge

Christopher G. Nevins, Gillespie County Court at Law Judge

Dr. Lillian Ringsdorf
Region 8 DSHS, San Antonio, Texas




J. D. Hickman
Justice of the Peace Precinct 1



Catherine Kuhlmann
Justice of the Peace Precinct 2



Linda Meier McCann
Justice of the Peace Precinct 3



Carl Schoessow
Justice of the Peace Precinct 4