

COVID 19 PLAN FOR THE

REAL 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 REAL 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 safely. Due to demographics and topography of Real County, cell phone services and/or internet services are not always available in several areas within the County and often times are not working properly, and one-third of the citizens of Real County are on some form of Government assistance and are therefore unable to afford internet services.
3. The Local Administrative Judge and the County Judge will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and each other and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the county.
4. The 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. Judges and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: Court staff will have their temperatures taken each morning prior to entry in the courthouse. If they have a temperature equal to or greater than 100 degrees F, or if they exhibit any of the symptoms listed in number 3 below, they will not be allowed to enter the building and will be asked to seek medical advice.

3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100 degrees 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, nausea, vomiting, 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. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: The Court Bailiff will take the temperature of all Court staff involved in Court Dockets as well as court participants prior to any court proceeding. Any staff or participants who exhibit any symptoms set out in #3 above will not be permitted to enter the courtroom and will be advised to seek medical attention. The hearing will be reset or accommodations will be made to allow the person to participate remotely.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Real County Constitutional Court will have docket call once per month that being the second Monday of each month unless it falls on a holiday, then Court will be in session on Tuesday. Docket calls usually comprise of 6-10 defendants at one time. Court schedules will be coordinated so that no more than one docket will take place on any given day. All in person hearings will comply with the Social Distancing requirements set forth under the heading Social Distancing below. All in person hearings will be spaced adequately to allow for proper cleaning between each hearing.

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 County 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 County court will be accommodated by either Zoom videoconference remote docket call if available or individual docket call.

Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for District court will be accommodated by being given the opportunity to participate remotely via Zoom videoconference if they are a witness or a party, or being excused from service upon proof of age or underlying health conditions if they are a potential juror. All persons who have business at the courthouse with offices other than court offices will receive special accommodations on a case by case basis upon notice to the office in question.

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. Real County has one Courtroom only, located on the 1st floor.
3. 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.

Gallery

4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and 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.

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.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building, outside of elevators on each floor, outside of each courtroom, and outside of bathrooms.
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. 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 court building, the Court Bailiff will ask the individuals if they are feeling feverish; have a cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty

breathing, loss of taste or smell, joint pain, are experiencing nausea, vomiting or diarrhea; or have been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID19. 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, the Court Bailiff will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.0°F will be refused admittance to the court 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 °F will not be transported to the court building.
4. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including a mask and gloves.

Face Coverings

1. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided.
2. Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for over 1 hour will be provided surgical masks and required to wear them while in the court building if the supply is available.

Cleaning

1. Court building court staff will clean the courtrooms at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
2. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
3. Courtroom surfaces exposed to participants will be cleaned by court staff in between each hearing.

Other

REAL COUNTY Constitutional County Court averages approximately ten (10) defendants per docket call. At monthly docket calls/court proceedings, all defendants will individually check in one by one exercising social distancing measures with the Court Bailiff outside the Courthouse Southside Entrance under the awning for screening. Once the defendant is assessed and determined safe to enter the building, then the defendant

will be advised to enter the Courtroom for his/her docket call and then escorted outside the Courtroom, and the next defendant will upon completion of screening will enter the Courthouse-Courtroom. No family members will be allowed to enter with any defendant, unless needed for interpretation purpose and will undergo the same screening prior to entering.

Real County does not have a full-time cleaning staff.

I have attempted to confer 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 and county judge, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the judges of the courts with courtrooms in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: _____