

# **COVID-19 OPERATING PLAN FOR THE STONEWALL 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 **Stonewall 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 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: Upon entering the courtroom the Judge and all court staff will have their temperature taken and will only be allowed to proceed if the temperature reading is less than 99.6°F.
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 99.6°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 courtroom and should seek medical advice.
4. Judges and court staff will be required to practice social distancing, wear face coverings if within 6 feet of other parties and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: face masks and gloves will be provided to the Judge and all court staff.

### **Scheduling**

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Any use of the District Courtroom must be scheduled through the District Judge's Office.

### **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, county website if available, county Facebook page if available and on the courtroom door.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by allowing for hearings to be rescheduled if needed, specially set hearings to allow for minimum contact with others and allow remote hearings/hybrid hearings as available.

### **Social Distancing**

1. All persons not from the same household who are permitted in the courthouse and courtroom will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least six (6) feet.
2. Only (1) person will be allowed in a restroom. A notice will be posted on each restroom door.

#### *Gallery*

3. 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.
4. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

#### *Well*

5. 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 six (6) feet between each space.

### **Hygiene**

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the counsel tables, at the witness stand, on the judges' bench, at the entrances to the building, outside of each courtroom entrance, and outside of each bathroom.
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 on the courtroom door.

### **Screening**

1. When individuals attempt to enter the courtroom, the bailiff will ask the individuals if they are feeling feverish; feeling ill; 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 courtroom.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the courtroom, the bailiff will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 99.6°F will be refused admittance to the courtroom.

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 99.6°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 gloves and face masks.

### **Face Coverings**

1. All individuals entering the courtroom will be required to wear face coverings at all times.
2. 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.

### **Cleaning**

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every day.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
4. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

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 courts with courtrooms in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/18/2020



---

Local Administrative District Judge