

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Titus 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 of the 76th District Court, 276th District Court, County Court, and Justice Courts of Titus 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, when practical.
3. The local administrative district judge will maintain regular communication with the local health authority Dr. Christopher Burling and Titus County Judge Brian Lee 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 and or practical.
2. All employees, court staff and local elected officials have been advised of the below listed symptoms and SHALL NOT attend a hearing if they have been exposed to COVID-19 or are showing signs of symptoms.
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 99.9°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. All judges and court staff will wash or disinfect hands upon entering the court facilities and before interaction with other staff or litigants.
5. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
6. Protective Measures: All court staff and Judges will additionally adhere to the respective county's Covid-19 plans. Judges should admonish anyone failing to follow this or the county's Covid-19 plan.

Scheduling

Each court will adopt schedules consistent with this plan.

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 being allowed to participate by special setting and/or video conferencing.

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. No more than two individuals not from the same household will be permitted in an elevator. If more than one individual from the same household is in an elevator, no other individuals will be permitted in the elevator.
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.
4. Public common areas, including breakrooms and snack rooms, have been closed to the public.

Gallery

5. 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.
6. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

Well

7. 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 participant.

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" have been posted in multiple locations in the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, a bailiff 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, the bailiff or other designate personnel will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 99.9°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 99.9°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 N95 face or surgical mask, hand sanitizer and latex gloves.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the Titus County Annex District court room 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.
3. 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

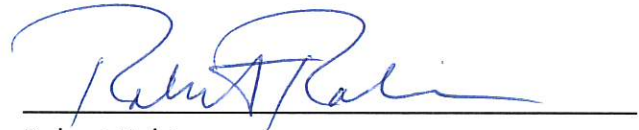
1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every 2 (two) hours.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms between every scheduled hearing.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies 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.

Other

District Court hearings will be conducted in the Titus County Annex. See additional court plans and precautions attached.

I have attempted to confer or have conferred with all judges of courts with courtrooms in Titus County 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 Titus County covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: May 28, 2020



Robert Rolston

Local Administrative District Judge

Additional Court Plans and Precautions 76th / 276th District Courts

1. Seats will be arranged to avoid close contact with others. All lobby seating will be closed. Brochures and pamphlets will be removed. No loitering will be allowed in the lobby or hallways.
2. A motion and order will be required for all settings including pleas and agreed cases. All motions and orders for settings should be emailed to kwilson521@yahoo.com with three preferred setting dates and times. The requesting attorney shall copy the opposing side in the email. When emailing the request for a setting, the requesting attorney should provide a time estimate, if the case is agreed or opposed and the contested issues at hand.
3. The court will schedule contested hearings Monday through Wednesday with one hearing at 9:00 a.m., and the next hearing time beginning at 1:15 p.m. Attorneys will be limited to one hour per side for presentation of evidence. Court will start on time with no time given for negotiations between attorneys. Attorneys will be required to contact the opposing side the day before trial and narrow all issues before coming to court due to time restraints.
4. All Friday District courts will be reserved for agreed cases and pleas unless a special setting is approved. A motion and order will be required for settings on these days, as well, and should be emailed to kwilson521@yahoo.com. Plea papers from the defendant and the defendant's attorney shall be signed in advance.
5. The court will set hearings to allow time for cleaning between cases. Attorneys and their clients SHOULD NOT show up earlier than 5 minutes before their scheduled hearing as there will not be additional seating and loitering in the hallways or lobby is prohibited. To schedule cases efficiently, you should contact our office by phone if you would like to set multiple cases for a Friday court. If you request multiple hearings for a single Friday court, you should plan for the possibility of your hearings being split up at different times throughout the day.
6. Request for special settings on Thursdays will be scheduled around drug court.
7. The Bailiff and / or cleaning staff will sanitize the courtroom after every hearing.
8. No children allowed unless approved in advance by the District Judge.
9. Request for continuances will only be accepted by motion and order only and should be submitted to kwilson521@yahoo.com.

10. The jail is authorized to bring over a maximum of two inmates at a time. However, all inmates and Correctional officers will be screened by the bailiff at the metal detector before entering.
11. Request for an interpreter should be made when the motion and order setting the case is emailed.
12. Settings in District Court will not be allowed until June 15, 2020.

Additional Court Plans and Precautions

76th / 276th Judicial District Drug Court

1. The Drug Court team will conduct staff meetings in the Annex Courtroom A in order to maintain social distancing.
2. Drug Court hearings will be conducted in 5 groups of no more than 3 participants.
3. The team members who will be present at the hearing will be seated in the Courtroom in order to maintain required social distancing.
4. The drug court team members attending the hearings will be Jim Arnold, Ellie Valdelamar, both District Judges, Ken Wilson, Chuck Bailey or David Colley and Lori Chism.
5. If any team member has or exhibits any signs or symptoms of Covid-19 such as temperatures equal to or greater than 99.9°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, should seek medical advice and will be excused from court.
6. All participants and team members will wear face mask or coverings while attending staff meetings and hearings when practical.
7. The participants will be screened by a bailiff for temperature, symptoms and potential prior exposure before they enter the annex.
8. No children will be allowed unless approved in advance by the District Judge.

Titus County Court Plans and Precautions for County Court

Courtroom Guidelines-

- All persons entering the courtroom must immediately use the provided hand sanitizer if they wish to attend the proceeding.
- All persons will be seated at a minimum of 6 feet apart.
- If you are feeling ill, tested positive for COVID-19, or have been exposed to someone that tested positive you will not be allowed to attend. You must contact your bondsman and your attorney. If you do not have a bondsman or attorney you will need to contact Lexi Reynolds with the County Attorney's Office at 903-717-8244 or alexisreynolds1995@gmail.com.
- ALL persons must abide by the guidelines set forth in this Plan or will not be allowed to remain in the courtroom.
- No loitering will be allowed in the lobby or hallways.

Masking is not required but it is **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

Additional Court Plans and Precautions Titus County Justice of the Peace Precinct 1, 2, 3, 4

1. Sanitize hands before entering Court Room, wear face coverings, maximum of 9 people in the Courtroom (3 per party) defendant/plaintiff, representative and/or witness, Court personal (No children allowed.)
2. Only one case will be schedule in the Court room at a maximum of 30 minutes. After finishing with case, Court room will be disinfected immediately.
3. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned every time after a hearing.
4. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by Providing face coverings if they don't have one, allow them to sit close to the entrance and have hearing from the back without having to approach the bench.

**COVID-19 ADVISORY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH
SERIOUS UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITIONS
AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS**

You have the RIGHT to ask for accommodations from the Court if you have 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.

TO REQUEST SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS FROM THE COURT PLEASE CONTACT 903-577-6736 OR THE CLERK OF THE COURT.