



## COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Tom Green 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 Tom Green County, those Courts will implement the following protective measures:

### General

1. "Court buildings," as used herein, means the Tom Green County Courthouse, the Judge Michael D. Brown Justice Center, and any other Tom Green County building which houses a Justice of the Peace, their courtroom or their court staff. The Municipal Court for the City of San Angelo is not addressed in this order.
2. "Courthouse Security," as used herein, means those persons who are employed by (and under the direction of) the Tom Green County Sheriff's Department and assigned to the Courthouse Security detail. Bailiffs and Constables are not Courthouse Security.
3. "Court Staff," as used herein, means Court Administrators, Court Reporters, Bailiffs, and Constables (when acting as Bailiffs).
4. 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.
5. All Judges will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
6. The Local Administrative District Judge will maintain regular communication with the Local Health Authority and County Judge, and adjust this operating plan as made necessary by conditions within Tom Green County.
7. 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 reasonable to do so.
2. The Judge of each Court will be responsible for monitoring themselves and their Court Staff to assure that, whenever reasonably possible, they comply with the following:
  - a. In the Tom Green County Courthouse and in the Judge Michael D. Brown Justice Center: Upon entering the building, Judges and Court Staff will present to Courthouse Security personnel (or other person(s) designated by the Judge of each Court) and have their temperature taken by an infrared/temporal thermometer;

- b. In all other Tom Green County court buildings:  
Upon entering that portion of the building that houses court offices and/or a courtroom, Judges and Court Staff will present to the person(s) designated by the Judge and have their temperature taken by an infrared/temporal thermometer;
- c. Judges or Court Staff who feel feverish or have a measured temperature equal to or greater than 100°F (or whatever the current, State-recommended maximum temperature is on that date); who have 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, or diarrhea); or who, within the last fourteen (14) days and without wearing appropriate personal protective equipment, have had known, close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19; shall leave the building and should seek medical advice.
- d. It is recommended that Judges and Court Staff wear face coverings when going to and from their offices, and when in situations that require close contact with others. At the discretion of the Judge, and when appropriate and practical, properly installed acrylic/Plexiglas shields may be substituted for masks in court offices and courtrooms.
- e. Judges and Court Staff will practice social distancing and appropriate hygiene (based on the latest recommendations) at all times.
- f. Protective Measures: It is recommended that Judges and Court Staff review the latest Interim Guidance for Communities, Schools and Workplaces issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>).

### **Scheduling**

1. All Judges should confer and work together, as necessary, to reduce occupancy in court buildings.
2. The Court Administrators for the courts located in the Tom Green County Courthouse will confer and work together to schedule in-person settings in such a way as to minimize courthouse occupancy and limit contact between staff, attorneys and litigants.
3. The Court Administrators for the courts located in the Judge Michael D. Brown Justice Center will confer and work together to schedule in-person settings in such a way as to minimize occupancy in the Justice Center and limit contact between staff, attorneys and litigants.
4. Court Administrators located in all other Tom Green County court buildings will schedule in-person settings in such a way as to minimize occupancy in their building and limit contact between staff, attorneys and litigants.

### **Vulnerable Populations**

1. Individuals who are over age 65; individuals with serious, underlying health conditions such as: high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, and asthma; and individuals whose immune systems are compromised by illness, medication, or chemotherapy; 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, 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 buildings.

3. The Judges will make every reasonable effort to accommodate members of vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court. Those accommodations may include – but are not limited to - allowing persons to appear remotely, allowing persons to testify by affidavit or deposition, scheduling a person's appearance when court occupancy is at a minimum, and allowing the person a continuance when other accommodations are not appropriate or practical.

### **Social Distancing**

1. "Social Distancing," as referred to in this plan, means a minimum distance of six (6) feet (diameter) between an individual and any other person. That distance may be increased or decreased based upon the latest guidelines issued by the CDC or the Local Health Authority.
2. All persons, not from the same household, who are permitted in the court building will be required to maintain minimal social distancing.
3. 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.
4. Each restroom will be evaluated to determine the appropriate capacity based on the latest social distancing recommendations. The maximum capacity will be posted on each restroom door.
5. Each conference room will be evaluated to determine the appropriate capacity based on the latest social distancing recommendations. The maximum capacity will be posted on each conference room door.
6. Public common areas, including breakrooms and snack rooms, will be closed to the public.

### **Gallery**

7. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom will be determined and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by the Bailiff (or any other appropriate person designated by the Judge).
8. The gallery of the courtroom will be marked to clearly identify available seating pursuant to the latest social distancing guidelines. Seating is limited to every other row.

### **Well**

9. To the extent possible, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and seating for the clerk, court reporter, and bailiff - in each courtroom - will be arranged to insure appropriate social distancing between all persons.
10. It is recommended – where appropriate and practical – to install acrylic/Plexiglas shields between the Judge and the witness, the witness and the court reporter, and the clerk and any attorney or party.

### **Hygiene**

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers will be placed at the entrances to the Tom Green County Courthouse and the Judge Michael D. Brown Justice Center. Hand sanitizer dispensers will be

placed as near as is practical to the entrance of all other court buildings. Whenever reasonably possible, hand sanitizer dispensers will be placed outside of elevators on each floor, outside of each courtroom, and outside of all bathrooms.

2. Tissues will be placed in the hall near the door of each courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, and on the judges' benches.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" will be posted in multiple locations on each floor of each court building.

### **Screening**

1. When an individual enters the Tom Green County Courthouse or the Judge Michael D. Brown Justice Center, Courthouse Security personnel will take their temperature utilizing an infrared/temporal thermometer and have them complete the COVID-19 screening form (attached hereto). Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100°F (or whatever the current, State-recommended maximum temperature is on that date) will be refused admittance to the court building.
2. When an individual enters any other Tom Green County court building, a person assigned by the Judge will take their temperature and ask the COVID-19 screening questions, whenever reasonably possible. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100°F (or whatever the current, State-recommended maximum temperature is on that date) will be refused admittance to the court building.
3. Inmates being transported from the jail to any 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 (or whatever the current, State-recommended maximum temperature is on that date) will not be transported to any court building.
4. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided (and encouraged to utilize) personal protective equipment. Personal protective equipment will, at a minimum, consist of single-use, disposable examination gloves and a NIOSH approved facemask.

### **Face Coverings**

1. All individuals entering any court building will be instructed to (and should) wear face coverings at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them. 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 each court building daily. "Common Areas" include, but are not limited to: elevators (including the walls and buttons on the elevators); stairwells (handrails); door knobs and door face plates; benches; and all bathroom fixtures.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean and disinfect the courtrooms at the end of each day that the courtroom is utilized.

3. When reasonable, safe, and appropriate, Court Staff will clean counsel tables, the witness stand, microphones, and any other areas where people have been seated, between each hearing.
4. Any person performing the cleaning addressed in this subsection will be provided information on proper cleaning techniques, cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus, and appropriate personal protective equipment.

### **Other**

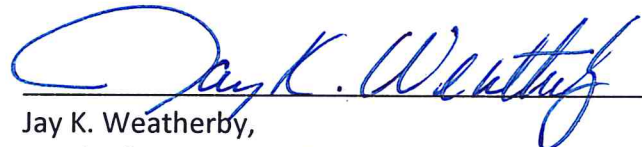
The Local Administrative District Judge, after consulting with the Judge of the affected Court, may alter these plans (in a reasonable and prudent manner and consistent with the most recent Texas Supreme Court Emergency Order Regarding the COVID-19 State of Disaster) whenever it is deemed necessary to do so to best provide for the health and safety of the public, the court staff, the attorneys, and the litigants.

**ANY DISPUTED ISSUES REGARDING THE INTERPRETATION OF THIS PLAN WILL BE RESOLVED BY THE JUDGE OF THE COURT IN WHICH THE DISPUTE ARISES.**

### **Local Administrative District Judge Acknowledgement**

I have conferred (or attempted to confer) with all Tom Green County Judges regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the Local Health Authority, Dr. James Vretis, and the Tom Green County Judge, Stephen Floyd. Documentation verifying each consultation is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the Judges of courts with courtrooms in the court buildings covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: May 28, 2020



Jay K. Weatherby,  
Local Administrative District Judge  
Tom Green County, Texas

# Tom Green County Sheriff's Office

**J. Nick Hanna**  
Chief Deputy



**Phone 325-655-8111**  
**FAX-325-655-5393**

**Sheriff David Jones**  
222 W. Harris  
San Angelo, Texas 76903

## COVID-19 Screening Questions

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Temperature: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Screened

\_\_\_\_\_  
DOB

Have you traveled to one of the affected regions or countries within the last 14 days? YES NO

Have you had contact with anyone with confirmed COVID-19 in the last 14 days? YES NO

Have you had any of these symptoms in the last 14 days?  
Fever greater than 100 YES NO  
Difficulty breathing YES NO  
Cough YES NO

Are you currently experiencing fever over 100? YES NO

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, place a mask on the individual and contact the Medical Department.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Screening Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person screened  
I attest that the answers to the questions are true and correct.