

# **COVID-19 Operating Plan for the SACHSE MUNICIPAL COURT. DALLAS AND COLLIN County Judiciary**

**(REVISED January 4, 2021)**

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the buildings housing the court, the court of **CITY OF SACHSE, DALLAS AND COLLIN COUNTY, TEXAS**, 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 presiding judge of the municipal court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and mayor to adjust this operating plan if necessary, with conditions in the city.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than January 18, 2021

## **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: (1) daily temperature check, (2) daily review of COVID-19 symptoms, (3) daily check for immediate contacts affected by COVID-19.
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 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: (1) Installment of plexiglass protective glass, (2) provide mask, (3) mark social distancing, (4) provide hand sanitizer, (5) have available and use daily thermometer.

## **Scheduling**

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:

- (1) The City of Sachse Municipal Court will hold all hearings remotely through the Zoom platform. The usage of remote proceedings is necessary to limit the number of required in-person hearings. Every effort to provide remote hearings will be made including, but not limited to arraignments, pretrial, bench trials, jury trials, juvenile hearings, animal hearings, and property hearings.
- (2) Alternative options for resolving cases will be made available to citizens including, but not limited to, online, mail, drop box, and email.
- (3) The court is limiting in-person proceedings to be held only when absolutely necessary. These in-person proceedings will include, but not limited to, assault family violence cases where finger printing is required, or for those who have contacted the court with technological difficulties or lack thereof.
- (4) In the event an in-person hearing is necessary, the docket shall consist of no more than 25% normal Courtroom capacity.
- (5) Court dockets limited to no more than 25% (no more than 32 persons) of occupancy of court building, (2) limit dockets to current cases, (3) disseminate notices limiting entrance to defendants

### **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 direct contact of vulnerable population defendants and individual court date accommodation if requested.

### **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. No more than 32 people will be allowed in the court room at any given time. This includes court staff and defendants.
6. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to chairs that are six feet apart.

#### *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 space.

#### **Hygiene**

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building and entrances to the courtroom.
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 staff** 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 all will have their temperature measured by an infrared thermometer or remote screening kiosk. 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 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 **mask, gloves, hand sanitizer, and any other necessary items.**

#### **Face Coverings**

1. All individuals entering the court building 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 before every court session. If a court session lasts more than two hours an additional cleaning will take place. Otherwise the cleaning will take place before the court reopens the next day.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean 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 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 mayor, documentation of which is attached to this plan or signature of approval included below. 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: 01-04-2021

  
ROBERT J. BEASLEY

Presiding Judge of Municipal Court

Date: 01/04/2021

  
C. Jim Lawrence

Health Official, City of Sachse

APPROVED:

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HON. RAY WHELESS, PRESIDING JUDGE  
First Administrative Judicial Region, State of Texas