

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Wylie Municipal Court

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 the Wylie Municipal Court 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 Wylie Municipal Court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and the mayor, and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the Wylie Municipal Court.

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: Temperatures will be taken of all Judges and Court Staff upon entering the building for the day.
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 are recommended to wear face coverings for hearings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times. Hands should be washed often for at least 20 seconds.
5. Protective Measures: court staff working the service window are separated from the public by a bullet resistant window. Staff are provided with hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes for workstations, gloves, and masks. Hand Sanitizer is provided in the lobby for customers. Signs have been placed to encourage social distancing while waiting at the service window. Options available to handle cases by phone, email, mail, and a 24 hour drop box are being encouraged to reduce any in-person dealings with court cases. Notices for these options have been posted on the court's website, mailed, and are mentioned on the court's phone answering system. Signatures on court documents will be required only if necessary, and when required give away pens will be provided to keep contact to a minimum.

Scheduling

1. All efforts will be made to avoid any case being scheduled for an in-person hearing. For any requests received from defendants or defense attorneys for a hearing, the prosecutor will review the case and provide a plea offer that is mailed with an extension of time to respond to the offer. Defendants can handle their citations by mail, email, online, and in some circumstances by phone. For any cases that require a hearing, the case will be scheduled for a zoom or other type of electronic hearing. In some circumstances a telephone conference may be scheduled. All efforts will be made to accommodate the public who don't have access to technology to participate in electronic hearings.

2. Once all efforts have been made to avoid in-person hearings, if the court must proceed in-person the following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Each hearing will consist of no more than ten (10) defendants. In between each hearing, thirty (30) minutes will be allowed to properly clean and sanitize. Defendants will not be allowed to bring other guests with them to a hearing. Juvenile defendants shall only be accompanied by one parent/guardian and no other guests including siblings. Accommodations will be made to comply with the Open Courts Provision but at no time will the Courtroom exceed 25% normal Courtroom Capacity, which is 25 guests.

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. *"COVID19 NOTICE - Please contact the court to make other arrangements for a hearing if you are over age 65 or 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."*
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by scheduling a phone conference with the judge, prosecutor, and clerk.

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. 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

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. Seats are covered with disposable coverings and will be replaced and cleaned between each hearing.

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 6 feet between each space.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building, 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 of the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, an employee of the Wylie Fire Department 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, an employee of the Wylie Fire Department 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 court building.
3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including a face covering and gloves.

Face Coverings

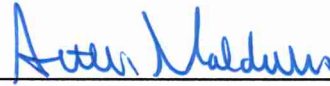
1. It is recommended for all individuals entering the court building for court hearings to wear face coverings at all times.
2. Facemasks or covering should completely conceal the wearer's nose and mouth at all times.
3. Children aged 2 years or younger should not wear face coverings.
4. Individuals 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 if available.
5. 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.
6. A designated receptacle will be provided at exits to collect used disposable facemasks.

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 hours. Cleaning staff are also periodically wiping down frequently touched surfaces such as doors and countertops throughout each 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 EPA grade cleaning supplies that are 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 the mayor for the City of Wylie, Matthew Porter, 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: Click or tap to enter a date.



Presiding Judge Art Maldonado

Wylie Municipal Court