

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Arlington Municipal Court City 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 City of Arlington 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. Court staff will complete online training available through the City of Arlington's Human Resources department on COVID-19 symptom awareness, cleaning and disinfecting, social distancing and respiratory etiquette as outlined in Governor Abbott's Report to Open Texas.
4. The presiding judge of the municipal court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and mayor and adjust this operating plan as necessary based upon conditions in the city.
5. 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. It is recommended for employees to perform a self-check before reporting to work. Employees that are showing signs of COVID-19 should stay home or should notify an immediate supervisor if already at work and may be asked to return home. Per the Governor's report, below is a list of symptoms of possible COVID 19.
 - a. Cough
 - b. Shortness of Breath
 - c. Chills or repeated shaking with chills
 - d. Headache
 - e. feeling feverish or a measure temperature of greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit
 - f. Sore Throat
 - g. Loss of taste or smell
 - h. Muscle Pain
 - i. Diarrhea
 - j. Known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have Covid-19

3. Judges and court staff will practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
4. Protective Measures: Whenever possible, judges will conduct meetings with others virtually or over the phone.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
Monday through Friday from 7:30 to 5:00 PM.
2. Overflow occupancy for lobby areas have been established in the Court Assembly Room to limit the number of individuals in the lobby areas.
3. If overflow capacity is reached, phone numbers will be taken, and defendants will be required to wait in their vehicles until occupancy has decreased.

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. **While some individuals may appear to be part of the vulnerable population, it may be difficult to determine if a person is in fact part of a vulnerable population.** Therefore, in our social distancing, hygienic preventative measures, virtual court options and scheduling, - we treat all populations that interact with the Court as a vulnerable population. Thus, all individuals who interact with the Court are treated as if they are vulnerable and in an at-risk group.
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 the ability to appear remotely during a virtual court session when possible.

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 will be permitted in an elevator.
3. Each restroom has been evaluated to determine the appropriate capacity to ensure social distancing and appropriate signage has been placed in public restroom entry points.
4. Public common areas have been closed to the public.

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 bailiffs.
6. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to appropriate social distancing parameters. 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.
7. Plexiglass guards have been installed in all courtrooms and mitigates the direct contact between the clerk and the defendant.
8. An overhead projector is available in each courtroom to limit the number of documents being passed.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building, outside of elevators on each floor, and in the lobby of the main courtroom corridor.
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. Signage concerning stopping the spread of COVID-19 and distributed by the City of Arlington EOC has been posted in multiple locations on each floor of the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, security screeners and signage 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. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including facemasks, eye protection or shields and disposable gloves.

Face Coverings

1. It is highly recommended that all individuals entering the court building wear face coverings at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided as supplies allow.

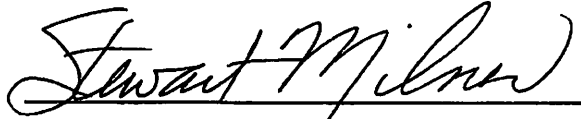
Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas and Courtrooms of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned per city cleaning service parameters.

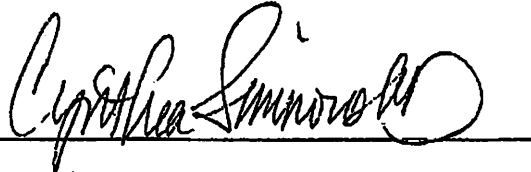
3. Court staff will be provided Personal Protective Equipment such as facemasks, eye protection or shields, disposable gloves and appropriate cleaning supplies. The cleaning supplies will be utilized as per the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines.

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. 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: 5/28/2020



Stewart Milner, Presiding Judge, City of Arlington



Dr. Cynthia Simmons, Public Health Authority, City of Arlington



Jeff Williams, Mayor, City of Arlington