

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Municipal Court, Big Lake, Texas

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the building housing the court, the Big Lake Municipal Court will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. The judge 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. The judge will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. The judge will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and keep updated with the mayor to adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. The judge will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 15, 2020

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. The judge may perform the essential functions of his/her job remotely and will telework when possible.
2. Judge Monitoring Requirements: The Judge and Bailiff will hold weekly meetings.
3. If the judge 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. The judge and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations and current city policies at all times.
5. Protective Measures: Masks and disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer will be provided to staff.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: All hearings will occur remotely and any hearings that are in person will always be in established social distancing guidelines with protective measures in place.

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. The 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
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by remote means.

Social Distancing

1. All persons not from the same household who are permitted in the courtroom will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet. If there is any concern, the court will have the ability to use a thermal thermometer to check anyone's temperature coming into the court in a safe manner.
2. Each restroom is single person occupancy.
3. Public common areas, including breakrooms and snack rooms, have been closed to the public and will not be used by staff to share coffee, food or meetings.

Gallery

4. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
5. The gallery of the courtroom when open and the front lobby have been marked to identify appropriate social distancing. Seating will be spaced according to social distancing requirements of 6 feet apart.

Well

6. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, 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. 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. An electronic Hand Sanitizer station will be available at the entrance to the courtroom

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the bailiff, or designated employee, 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.
3. If there is any concern, the court will have the ability to use a thermal thermometer to check anyone's temperature coming into the court in a safe manner.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will wear face coverings at all times and their time in the court building will be monitored. If the individual does not have a face covering, the court will provide them with one.

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every day.
2. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

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 judge and court staff in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/18/2020



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court

**COVID-19
ACTIVE SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE**

Your health and well-being are of the utmost importance and we are taking measures to keep the court a safe environment for employees as well as the individuals under our charge and the public.

1. Within the last 14-days, have you experienced a new cough that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
 YES
 NO

2. Within the last 14-days, have you experienced new shortness of breath that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
 YES
 NO

3. Within the last 14-days, have you experienced a new sore throat that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
 YES
 NO

4. Within the last 14-days, have you experienced new muscle aches that you cannot attribute to another health condition or a specific activity such as physical exercise?
 YES
 NO

5. Within the last 14-days, have you had a temperature at or above 100.4° or the sense of having a fever/chills?
 YES
 NO

6. Within the last 14 days, have you had close contact, without the use of appropriate personal protective equipment, with someone who is currently sick with suspected or confirmed COVID-19?* *(Note: Close contact is defined as within 6 feet for more than 10 consecutive minutes)*
 YES
 NO

If the individual answers YES to any of the questions they will not be allowed into the courtroom.

Signature

Date

Printed name