

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Breckenridge 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 courts of **the City of Breckenridge** 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 and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than the date this Plan is approved by the Presiding Judge of the Eighth Administrative Judicial Region.

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: The Judge and Court staff will self-monitor and report concerns or symptoms as appropriate.
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 encouraged to wear face coverings, and will be required to practice social distancing and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: Judges and Court staff will be encouraged to wear face coverings when going to and from their offices and in situations where they are in close contact with the public. They will practice social distancing and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations while performing their professional duties.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Hearings shall be staggered to prevent more than 1 person from waiting in the lobby at a time. The Court will be flexible in allowing a party to appear remotely if requested. Pre-trial conferences for June will be held by phone.

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.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by allowing remote appearance or allowing their court setting to be postponed.

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 may only be used by one person at a time, since each restroom contains facilities for only one person.
3. Public common areas, including breakrooms and snackrooms, have been closed to the public.

Gallery

4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of the courtroom has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
5. For hearings open to or attended by the public, the gallery of the courtroom will be marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

Well

6. For trials, in the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, and judge's bench, will be arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space. For pre-trial conferences or other hearings, the courtroom will be arranged to provide social distancing of at least 6 feet between the Judge/Prosecutor and the Defendant and the Defendant's family/witnesses.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the Court window and outside of 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 in the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the Court Clerk or Judge 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. 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.
3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be encouraged 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 if the supply is available.
3. Individuals required to be in the court building will be provided with a face mask and encouraged to wear it while in the court building.

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every twenty-four hours, when in use.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtroom 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.

There are no other judges with courtrooms in the court building subject to 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 my staff and I conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

January 5, 2021



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court