

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of El Campo Municipal Court

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judge, and other individuals entering the building housing the court, the court of El Campo, Municipal Court, Wharton County Texas 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 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. Judge will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 10, 2020

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judge and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when necessary.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: Temperature and symptom checks prior to entering the building at the beginning of each workday.
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. Judge and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time during hearings.
5. Protective Measures: Court staff working at the court window are separated from public by a safety bullet resistant window. When accepting currency staff will wear protective gloves. Upon entering the building and after any interaction with employees, customers or items in the building court staff will wash or disinfect hands. Court staff will clean and disinfect any regularly touched surfaces or items that come into contact with customers.

Scheduling

1. The following court processes are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Number of chairs have been reduced in court lobby to allow proper distancing. On hearing dates defendants are to wait in their vehicles until their case is called on the docket and time for them to appear. Defendants will not be allowed to bring unnecessary guests. Juvenile

may be accompanied by one or both of their parents. However, the court may limit number of siblings allowed in building. Court docket will have a reduced number of defendants in order have enough time to allow court staff to sanitize and clean between each hearing.

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. 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 remote hearings when possible, set on a later docket and or individual hearings where necessary.

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. Since the building is single floor there are no elevator issues to consider.
3. Court restroom is a single capacity room with a lock so there will be no need for maximum capacity notice on the 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.
6. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating will be placed as to ensure social distancing standards are followed. Gallery chairs used during court are made of a material that is not cloth and is easily sanitized.

Well

7. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk 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/exits to the court lobby, entrances/exits of the courtroom and located near 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 common areas.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations including the court lobby and court entrance.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building for court hearings, court bailiff or court clerk 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 for court hearings, court bailiff or court clerk 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 face covering or gloves.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building for court hearings 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

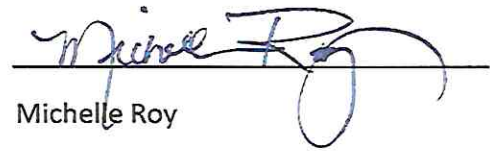
1. Court staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every 2 hours. Court staff will also periodically wipe down touched surfaces as needed in addition to the scheduled cleaning.
2. Court staff will clean the courtroom between every hearing, between morning and afternoon proceedings, and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
3. Court staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
4. Court staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

Other

The Court will utilize Zoom teleconferencing when necessary for all persons having business before the court who are unable to have their case reset for a later docket or fall into the Vulnerable Population category and cannot be scheduled by private appointment.

This court is the only court that uses this building. 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 court and staff in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/19/2020

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michelle Roy", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Michelle Roy

Presiding Judge of Municipal Court
City of El Campo