

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Town of Flower Mound 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 Town of Flower Mound 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. 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 Town.
3. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 1, 2020.

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements:

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.

2. Judges and court staff will be required to practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
3. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings while in the courtroom.
4. When not in the Courtroom, Judges and court staff may communicate with defendants, attorneys, and visitors to the court through glass windows currently installed in the court building.

Scheduling

The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:

1. The Court will increase the number of court docket days from two (2) days every-other week to three (3) days every-other week to accommodate fewer people in the court room at the same time.
2. The Court will schedule dockets every one-half hour (rather than every one or two hours as is typical) to accommodate fewer people in the court room at the same time.
3. The number of people scheduled per docket will be reduced so that no more than 12 people will be included on a singular docket.

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. Judges 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 has been posted on the courts' website and in conspicuous locations around the court building.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by allowing the vulnerable person to choose to either remain in their vehicle until their case is called or wait in an individual closed waiting room outside the courtroom until their case is called. The waiting rooms will be cleaned and disinfected between each use.
4. The Court will endeavor to schedule known vulnerable persons to appear early in the docket day in small dockets to allow them to appear and leave before other people arrive limiting their potential exposure.

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. To ensure social distancing we suggest a maximum of two persons at a time.
3. Public common areas have been closed to the public.

Gallery

4. The maximum capacity of the courtroom is sixty (60) people. Twenty-five percent is fifteen (15) persons. We will post a sign outside the courtroom door showing a maximum capacity of fifteen (15) people and to remind entrants to socially distance. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff and the judges.
5. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to one person (or persons same household) per row per side. The Courtroom has six rows of pews dissected by a center aisle. The participants (and person from their immediate household) will be seated on a singular row at least six feet from person seated on other rows or on the opposite side of the aisle. All distinct household groups will be separated by at least six feet.
6. Doors to the Courtroom will be propped open so visitors do not have to touch doors to enter or exit the courtroom.

Well

7. In the 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.
8. A table is placed in front of the bench to ensure that no one may approach within six feet of the judge.

Hygiene

1. A hand sanitizer dispenser has been placed in the lobby at the entrances to the courtroom.
2. Tissues have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, on the judges' bench, and in the hallway.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations in the court building.
4. A clean writing pen will be provided to each defendant. Before exiting the defendant will insert the used pen into a collection bin. Court staff will periodically remove, sanitize, and disinfect the used pens so that they may be re-used.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the courtroom, security personnel 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 and their hearing will be rescheduled to a later date.
2. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided with masks.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the courtroom 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 entering the court building to interact with court staff at the window will not be required to wear face coverings.

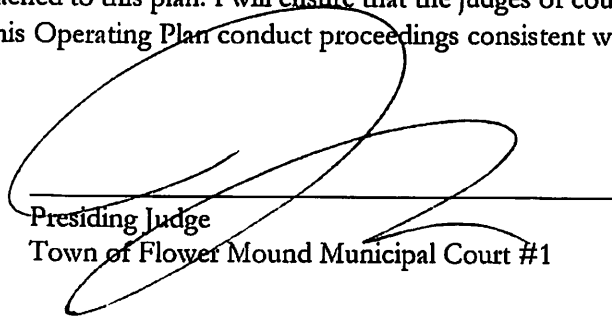
Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building daily.
2. Court staff will clean the courtrooms between morning and afternoon proceedings, and 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.

I have conferred 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, the Town Attorney, the Town Manager, the 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: June 1, 2020



Presiding Judge
Town of Flower Mound Municipal Court #1