

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Galena Park City 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 **Galena Park Municipal Court** will implement the following protective measures:

A. 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 if the City has the computer equipment necessary to implement remote proceedings.
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 November 9, 2020

B. Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judges and court staff are currently not set up to perform the essential functions of their job remotely, but as the Court moves forward, it will consider how to telework when possible, taking into account budget constraints. Workstations in the Court offices are spaced for six foot (6') social distancing requirements.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: The Presiding Judge and Court Administrator will meet regularly to address any of the court's needs to comply with these guidelines.
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.0 °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 required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: Masks, disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer will be provided to staff.

C. Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
The Court will increase the number of dockets and stagger start times to decrease the number of people at the courthouse at the same time. Hearings that are in person will always be in accordance with established six foot (6') social distancing guidelines, along with the requirements of masks or face coverings. The Court will have hand sanitizer placed at the

entrance and exit to the courtroom, as well as at any location where signatures are obtained. The court will provide a mask to any person without one. The court offices are equipped with glass that separates the Court staff from the public for document signing or payments. The Court will use its efforts to have plexiglass installed in the courtroom also to provide separation between the public, the Judge, and the Court staff. Defendants in the courtroom will be seated and spaced away from each other considering the six foot (6') social distance requirement. If at any time the number of people attempting to enter the courtroom exceeds the capacity for the courtroom allowing six foot (6') social distancing, the Court will implement a system that will have defendants check in at the door, give their phone number to the clerk or bailiff, and wait in their vehicle until called into the courtroom. The Court will use its best efforts to minimize traffic into the court by providing Defendants with options to arrange for alternate methods of handling cases instead of an in-person appearance.

D. 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 court's website and in conspicuous locations around the court building.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by remote means or by minimizing the persons in the courtroom as much as possible. These individuals will be provided the opportunity to appear by phone or by virtual court proceedings. If the individual chooses not to appear by phone and is not capable of appearing by virtual means, the Court will make other accommodations as necessary and possible on a case by case basis, such as attempting to schedule a date and time for the individual to appear when no other cases will be scheduled, or resetting the case for a date at which time the individual will be able to appear in person.

E. Social Distancing

i. Generally

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.
3. Public common areas, including breakrooms and snack rooms, have been closed to the public.

ii. Gallery

4. 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.
5. The courtroom will have movable chairs positioned to keep six foot (6') social distancing in the seating. The number of chairs set up will be limited to allowing for six foot social distancing in all directions.

iii. Well

6. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk, court reporter, and bailiff seating will be arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.

F. Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers will be placed at the entrances to the building, outside of elevators, outside of the courtroom, and outside of bathrooms.
2. Tissues will be placed near the door of the courtroom and in the restrooms.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flver" will be posted in multiple locations in the court building.

G. Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, a court staff member or bailiff 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, a bailiff will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.0°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 a mask.

H. Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times.
2. If an individual does not have a cloth face covering or mask, a disposable face mask will be provided.

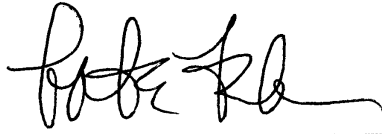
I. Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every 3 hours.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms between every hearing, 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.
4. 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 proceedings will be conducted consistent with this Operating Plan.

Date: 10/23/2020

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laticia Fuhr', written over a horizontal line.

Laticia Fuhr
Presiding Judge of Municipal Court