

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Gonzales Municipal Court 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 Gonzales 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 **county judge** and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the **county**.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than **June 24, 2020**.

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: **Adhere to Gonzales County's Emergency Declaration recommendations regarding COVID-19.**
2. 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.
3. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings in the courtroom, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
4. Protective Measures: **Hand sanitizer, tissues and face mask(s) will be provided to court staff.**

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
Allow a total of 20 persons which include court staff, prosecutor(s), witness(es), parent/guardian/family in the court room at a time to allow social distancing and appropriate hygiene practices or as Governor's Declaration is amended.

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 (*a copy of which is attached*).
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by **including the above practices to keep any from being compromised, rescheduling to another court date, teleconferencing, in-person proceedings in a limited courtroom access,** or any other accommodating option(s) that may be applicable for justice to be served efficiently and for public safety.

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 public restroom has been evaluated to determine the appropriate capacity to ensure social distancing and the maximum capacity has been posted on each restroom door of **one (1) person not the same household.**
3. Public common areas will continue to practice all declaration safety recommendations and protocols for the public.

Gallery

4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom has been determined and posted to **total 15 persons or as Governor's Declaration is amended.** The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
5. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to **skip two (2) rows and three (3) chairs for persons not of the same household.**

Well

6. In each 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.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building, outside of each courtroom and outside of 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 hallways.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations of the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, **the 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, bailiff will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual, if available. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.0°F will be refused admittance to the court building.
3. 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 and their case(s) will be rescheduled.
4. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including face masks, hand sanitizer, gloves and any other items and practices found to improve everyone's personal safety.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building 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 one (1) hour will be provided surgical masks and required to wear them while in the court building if the supply is available.

Cleaning

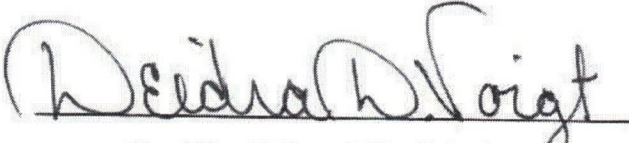
1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned as is practicable.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms as is practicable and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
3. Court building cleaning staff will be provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective to the COVID-19 strain.

Other

None.

I have attempted to confer 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 and the county judge, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that as the municipal judge for the City of Gonzales with courtrooms in the municipal building covered by this Operating Plan will conduct proceedings consistent with this plan or as the Governor's Declaration is updated, amended or canceled.

Date: 6/9/2020


Presiding Judge of Municipal Court