

# **COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Grand Prairie Municipal Court**

## **200 W. Main St., Grand Prairie, Texas 75050**

This plan is being submitted pursuant to direction by the Office of Court Administration as a prerequisite for conducting non-essential in-person proceedings in court during the COVID-19 pandemic.

All members of the public visiting the Grand Prairie Municipal Court building will be greeted by a city marshal at a single entrance and will pass through a metal detector. Hand sanitizers will be available at this checkpoint and the marshals will make certain COVID-19 health related inquiries as described herein. Court clerks are stationed behind plexiglass which will prevent air exchange with members of the public.

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 Grand Prairie 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. 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 June 1, 2020.

### **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: See attached City of Grand Prairie City Building Phase-In Requirements for Employees.
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures upon entering the building 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 practice social distancing inside the court building and common working areas and wear a face covering when social distancing cannot be maintained with co-workers, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times.

5. Protective Measures: See attached City of Grand Prairie City Building Phase-In Requirements for Employees.

### **Scheduling**

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
  - a. Dockets will move forward as scheduled but will be limited to 15 defendants.
  - b. Only 15 defendants will be allowed in each courtroom at a time to accommodate social distancing requirements for seating.
  - c. Defendants are encouraged to utilize existing convenience options to dispose of citations, such as on-line payment and submitting payment and other documents via regular mail.
  - d. Jury trials will not resume until further notice.

### **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, show cause 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.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by liberally allowing resets as needed and/or utilizing video procedures to conduct matters to the extent available.

### **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. Proper routing into the building is achieved by requiring all members of the public to enter through a metal detector at a single entrance. Social distance markers have been placed on the floors of the court building lobby and line ropes and other fixtures are set up to help individuals social distance when entering the court building or approaching the court window.
3. Social distancing and routing in the court building lobby will be supervised by the city marshals with assistance from court staff.
4. Only individuals with business before the court will be permitted to enter the courtroom unless an additional person is needed for physical assistance or language translation. A parent or guardian of a juvenile shall appear with the juvenile for a matter involving the juvenile.

5. The maximum occupancy for each restroom open to the public has been determined to be 2 individuals to ensure appropriate social distancing. The maximum capacity has been posted on each restroom door and will be monitored and enforced by the city marshals and court staff. Employee restrooms are single occupancy with a door lock.
6. The court does not maintain any breakrooms or snackrooms that are open to the public. The public water fountains have been disconnected.

#### *Courtroom Gallery*

7. Measurement of the seating area has determined that 15 is the maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom. Signage to that effect has been posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by the city marshals and court staff.
8. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to achieve 6 foot social distancing..
9. Persons with business in the courtroom shall check in with the clerk and, at that time, submit any necessary documents not already emailed and scanned into their file for Court and prosecutor review. After an individual checks in, the city marshals or other court staff may request that an individual provide a contact number and wait in their vehicle (if available) in the courthouse parking lot until the individual's case is called if the courtroom is at capacity. The city marshals or other court staff shall call or text the individual to appear in the courtroom as space becomes available. When this is not practicable, an individual will be allowed to remain in the court building lobby, subject to capacity limits, until their case is called.

#### *Courtroom Well*

9. In each 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 to the building, outside of each courtroom, and each public service window.
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 City of Grand Prairie's "Stay Safe – Help Stop the Spread" flyer (see attached) has been posted in multiple locations in the court building.
4. Defendant's shall be asked to use hand sanitizer prior to using the Court's signature pads.

#### **Screening**

1. The Court shall post signs outside the courthouse building advising persons that if they have a fever, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or other symptoms or if they have been

in close contact within the past two weeks with a person confirmed to have COVID-19 that they should contact the clerk via telephone to reset their court date or, if applicable, resolve their case using mail, telephone, or through the internet.

2. Thermal scanners have been ordered and will be in place within a month. In the meantime, when individuals attempt to enter the court building, city marshals will ask the individuals if their temperature exceeds 100.0°F or 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 case will be reset.
3. When individuals attempt to enter a courtroom, a city marshal 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 courtroom and their case will be reset.
4. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including face coverings and gloves.

### **Face Coverings**

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear a mask or face covering that must cover the mouth and nose 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 available. If not available, the individual's case will be reset.
3. Orders setting hearings, dockets notices, show cause notices and other communications notifying individuals of scheduled court dates will include information as to the requirements under 1. & 2. above as well as other relevant information pertaining to the Court's COVID-19 procedures. Additionally, a notice with this information has been posted on the Court's website.

### **Cleaning**

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least twice daily.
2. Court building cleaning 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.
4. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

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, mayor, and the

City's Environmental Services Manager, 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: 6/3/2020



Bryan S. Arnold  
Presiding Judge  
Grand Prairie Municipal Court



## City Building Phase-In Requirements for Employees

In order to limit the spread of COVID-19, all employees must comply with the following requirements upon return to the workplace.

### Before Work:

- All employees must take their temperature before leaving home if they have a thermometer. If temperature is 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher after taking at least two readings, employee shall contact their supervisor for further guidance.

### Upon Arrival to Work:

- All employees must stop at a sanitizing station and use hand sanitizer.
- Those who have not taken their temperature at home must take a temperature reading at the employee sanitizing station with the thermometer provided. All employees are encouraged to take a reading when arriving at the office regardless.
- Each employee will take his or her own temperature using the provided non-contact infrared thermometer.
- The thermometer should be placed 2-6 inches from the forehead to scan the temperature.
- The thermometer should be cleaned, using a disinfectant spray, after each use.
- If a temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher is detected, the employee should wait several minutes and take a second reading as outside temperature or employee activity can skew the result. If the second reading is also 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, the employee must leave the work area and contact their supervisor for further guidance.

### In the Office Environment:

- Maintain a social distance of 6 feet or more in the office environment (i.e. common working areas).
- Wear a face covering in the office environment when social distancing cannot be maintained with co-workers.
- Limit in-office meetings and maintain social distancing if in-person meetings are necessary (no more than 10 people should participate in an in-person meeting).
- Do not travel together in the same vehicle unless absolutely necessary.
- All common areas must be cleaned/disinfected twice per day (mid-day and prior to leaving).
- Workstations used by multiple people or in shifts shall be cleaned between employees or shifts with a disinfectant.
- Limit restroom occupancy, if possible.
- No work-related travel is authorized until further notice from the CMO.
- No outside training, until further notice, unless approved at the DCM level.

When personally interacting with customers/citizens:

- Utilize physical barriers, where available.
- Maintain a social distance of 6 feet or more when interacting with customers/citizens at all times and wear a face covering if no physical barrier is present.
- If customer/citizen does not have a mask, ask if they have one to please put it on.
- Avoid in-office customer/citizen meetings, if possible, and, if necessary, limit to less than 10 people and maintain social distance.
- No outside appointments or meetings with customers or citizens until authorized by the CMO (necessary field work is authorized to perform essential work duties).

In the main lobby of each building:

- Hand sanitizer will be made available to the public.
- Post the following signage at all public entrances:



- Provide floor markings where lines may form (the below floor marking is available at Environmental Quality for both carpet and vinyl, but other markings may be used).

