

# COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Granger 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 court of **City of Granger** 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 to 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 18, 2020

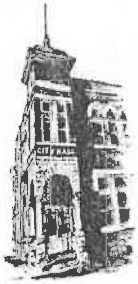
## Judge and Court Staff Health

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: All will pay close attention to the temperature and symptoms of COVID-19, thus will not enter the building if any symptoms are experienced. A temperature will be taken before court proceedings.
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. 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: All staff/judge will wear face masks, keep at least a 6ft. distance as well as wash with soap and water before and after court.

## Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: June 18, 2020 at 5:30 P.M. court will be reduced down to one third of the docket as well as the remaining court dates through August until further notice. *There will only be one defendant allowed in the court room at a time.*

## Vulnerable Populations



# CITY OF GRANGER

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## **ATTENTION:**

**Individuals who are over age of 65 and individuals with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems that are compromised such as chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy are considered to be vulnerable populations. There will be options available outside of an in-person appearance.**

Contact the court through phone or email by June 17,2020,thank you.

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. Each 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).
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**Contact the court through phone or email by June 17,2020, thank you.**

3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by a court date set for after June 18,2020. The court will do its best to provide information to these defendants including letters, postings on the website and around the building. The court will reach out to use technology on a one- on -one appearance.

**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. No more than two individuals not from the same household will be permitted in an elevator. If more than one individual from the same household is in an elevator, no other individuals will be permitted in the elevator. Granger Municipal Court is a single-story building that does not have an elevator. One foyer and court room.
3. 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. Granger Municipal Court has single occupancy rest rooms.
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. Maximum # allowable is 5.
- 6.
7. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

#### *Well*

8. 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 elevators on each floor, 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. Trash receptacles will be available at each of the locations identified in items #1 and #2 for sanitary disposal of all tissues.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations on each floor of the court building.

#### Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the court staff/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, the court staff/Bailiff 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. 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.
4. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including a mask and gloves.

#### **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 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 at least every two 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.

#### **Other**

## **Granger Municipal Court Proceeding Operating Plan**

### **Court holding in-person proceedings:**

**Dockets will be reduced to a third of the full court evenings to minimize the number on one given court appearance.**

**Measures have been put in place for most defendants to resolve their cases without an in- person appearance *such as* emailed pleas (guilty/no-contest), payment plans, filing for defensive driving, and deferrals.**

**Vulnerable defendants such as those 60 or older will be reset for a later date in the year, unless they wish to resolve their case immediately. We will also provide them alternate times when there are no other cases set.**

**Pre-trials/not guilty will be set for later in the year and all trials canceled until further notice.**

**At the request of the defendants a postponement will be granted for a later date.**

***Below is the last measure to ensure all defendants get their rightful day in court if the above options could not be met.***

## **Operating Plan**

Judge /Court staff will NOT be in court if exhibiting any signs of fever/ illness, symptoms of Covid-19.

All court personnel will wear a mask.

All defendants will be required to stay in their vehicles and given a number to place on their windshields. The bailiff will have a corresponding number that will match the defendant's number. The bailiff will approach the vehicle, screen the defendant with a temperature reading and symptoms list before being allowed to exit their vehicle. The defendant will sign into the court (docket) and be given a mask (required to wear into the court room).

There will ONLY be one defendant in the courtroom at a time. Exception is a juvenile that is required to appear with parent/guardian at which are of the same household will be allowed to enter together.

Hand sanitizer will be provided before they enter and when they exit.

Once all court proceedings have taken place, the entire surface areas of the court, foyer, rest room and doors will be disinfected and thoroughly cleaned.

In the event a defendant prefers to resolve their case via remote electronic means, date and time will be given to appear remotely and the case will be conducted via a remote platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

*Operating plans will remain in effect until updated guidance is issued from OCA indicating they are no longer required or upon the expiration in the Twelfth Emergency Order, as amended or extended, requiring adherence to OCA guidance.*

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 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.

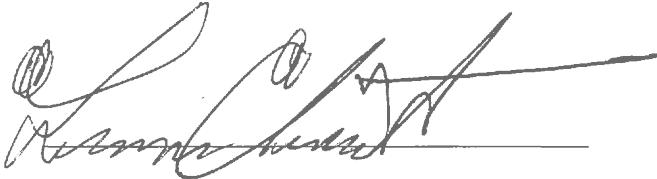
Date: June 3, 2020



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court



Williamson County and Cities Health District



Mayor of the City of Granger