

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Haskell 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 Haskell** 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 the date this plan is approved by the Presiding Judge of the 7th Administrative Judicial Region.

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: The Judge and Court staff will self-monitor and report concerns or symptoms as appropriate.
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 encouraged to wear face coverings and will be required to practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: The Court Clerk's Office has been closed to the public. All defendants wishing to make payments, enter pleas, etc. must go to the City offices next door. There, the Court Clerk will be protected by plexiglass.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building (City Hall):
Hearings shall be staggered to prevent more than 1 person from waiting in the lobby at a time. The Court will be flexible in allowing a party to appear remotely if requested.

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. 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.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by allowing remote appearance or allowing their court setting to be postponed.

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

Gallery

4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of the courtroom (City Council Chambers) will be determined and posted if any hearings are scheduled while this Plan is in effect. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
5. For hearings attended by the public, the gallery of the courtroom will be marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

Well

6. For any proceedings conducted while this Plan is in effect, 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.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed in the entrance area/lobby of City Hall.
2. Tissues have been placed in the entrance area/lobby of City Hall and in bathrooms.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations in the court building (City Hall).

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the courtroom (City Council Chambers) or the Court Clerk's office, the Court Clerk or Judge 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. 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.
3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment.

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.

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every twenty-four hours, when in use.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtroom 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.

There are no other judges with courtrooms in the court building subject to 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 my staff and I conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 1/5/2021



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court



Alberto Alvarez, Jr., Mayor of Haskell

Subject: RE: Haskell Municipal Court COVID-19 Operating Plan Re-Certification
Date: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 at 2:56:46 PM Central Standard Time
From: Ruth Ebangit
To: Eileen Hayman
Attachments: image002.jpg, image004.png, image007.png, image008.png, image009.jpg, image011.jpg, image012.png, image001.png

Eileen,

The plan looks good. The only modification I would recommend making is instead of encouraging folks to wear a mask into the court house, make it a requirement. Please have masks available for those who show up without one.

Ruth Ebangit M.D, M.P.H
Medical Director
Bluebonnet Detention Center
325-823-8031 X153



A Leader in Social Impact

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From: Eileen Hayman <eileen@txmunicipallaw.com>
Sent: Monday, January 4, 2021 2:31 PM
To: Ruth Ebangit <Ruth.Ebangit@mtcmedical.com>
Cc: Sharon Wells <sharon@txmunicipallaw.com>
Subject: FW: Haskell Municipal Court COVID-19 Operating Plan Re-Certification

EXTERNAL E-MAIL

Dr. Ebangit:

We have received additional time to get this done, and have been given a template by the State to use for the recertification. Attached is the template, for your information. Could you please tell us whether the existing operating plan (the PDF attached) is okay for us to proceed with in-person proceedings, if we need to. I would need a response by this Friday, if at all possible, so I can get this submitted to the Regional Presiding

Judge by the deadline of Monday the 11th.

Thank you,
Eileen

Eileen M. Hayman
Partner



500 CHESTNUT STREET, STE 1601 • ABILENE, TX 79602
PHONE: 325.701.7960 • FAX: 325.701.7961 • WWW.TXMUNICIPALLAW.COM

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From: Eileen Hayman
Sent: Tuesday, December 29, 2020 3:27 PM
To: ruth.ebangit@mtcmedical.com
Subject: Haskell Municipal Court COVID-19 Operating Plan Re-Certification

Dear Dr. Ebangit:

As we discussed by phone, the Office of Court Administration is requiring us to re-certify our COVID-19 Operating Plan to ensure it is still good given the current pandemic conditions. I am required to consult with you, our local health authority, to confirm whether you think we can still safely operate under this plan. I am forwarding our original email communications about the Operating Plan from June as well as a copy of the Plan for your review.

Can you please give me your opinion about whether the current plan provides sufficient health and safety protocols to permit in-person proceedings? Do you think that current local pandemic conditions are conducive to in-person proceedings? If so, are there any precautions that should be taken when those proceedings are conducted?

City Hall is currently closed to the public, and has been for some time. Anyone wishing to enter a plea or speak to the Judge must call in and they are given an appointment. The Judge and Court Clerk wear face coverings during any interaction with a defendant.

Once you respond, I am required to submit written documentation regarding our consultation to the Regional Presiding Judge for his approval.

Thank you again for your help and please let me know if you have any questions.

Eileen Hayman

City Attorney for Haskell

Eileen M. Hayman
Partner



We will be closed on Thursday Dec 31st and Friday Jan 1st to celebrate the New Year's holiday.
We will be back in the office on Monday, January 4th, 2021. Have a wonderful and safe New Year's!



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From: Dr. Ruth Ebangit <drebangit@hmhhealth.org>
Sent: Tuesday, June 9, 2020 12:49 PM
To: Eileen Hayman <eileen@txmunicipallaw.com>
Subject: Re: Haskell Municipal Court COVID-19 Operating Plan

Eileen,
Sorry for a delayed response. The document looks good to me and I approve of it. If you have any questions please feel free to reach out.

Ruth L. Ebangit M.D., M.P.H

Haskell Memorial Hospital Clinic

Fax: 940-427-1361

Phone: 940-864-8513

From: Eileen Hayman <eileen@txmunicipallaw.com>
Sent: Monday, June 8, 2020 3:28 PM
To: Dr. Ruth Ebangit <drebangit@hmhhealth.org>
Cc: JANET MOELLER <citymanager@haskelltexasusa.com>
Subject: Haskell Municipal Court COVID-19 Operating Plan

Dear Dr. Ebangit:

My name is Eileen Hayman and I am the City Attorney for Haskell. As you may know, the state Office of Court Administration is requiring all courts to have an operating plan in place to address the COVID-19 threat. I am required to consult with you regarding our proposed plan and obtain your approval to our plan. The plan that we have drafted is attached. We think it will work for us, logistically, and it reflects many of the measures already put in place to protect City employees and citizens. I have also reached out to Mayor Alvarez, who must approve of the plan as well, and once I have approval from both you and the Mayor I will forward this to our Regional Presiding Judge in Midland for approval and filing with the state.

Could you please review and let me know if this plan looks good to you? Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you,
Eileen

Eileen M. Hayman
Partner



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