

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Huntington 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 Huntington City Hall building, the courts of **the City of Huntington** 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, city administrator, county judge and mayor 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 August 1, 2020 (date subject to change as necessary due to pandemic).

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: Judge and Court Staff are the only persons who may enter the office area of the Huntington City Hall. The public lobby/waiting area is utilized for in-person contact not only by the Municipal Court, but also by all other city departments. The number of persons from the public that will be allowed in the lobby/waiting area for court purposes must be no greater than 1 person at a time unless otherwise specified as necessary by the Judge. (This provision does not apply to City Council meetings, as stated in Section Number 5 below). **This means that only a total of 3 persons may be present, which includes persons transacting business not only with the Municipal Court, but also any persons transacting business with any other city department.** The City of Huntington has the authority to increase or decrease any numbers or dates at any future time, as necessary.
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. No bathroom will be available to the public, unless medically necessary, or for persons given express permission by court personnel. There is no public water fountain in city hall. Clerks or personnel who deal with the public are provided with acrylic/glass guards. City personnel involved in any in-person contact must maintain social distancing of at least six feet apart and will be provided face masks.
5. Protective Measures: Persons, other than city employees, must enter only by the front door of city hall. All persons entering the lobby/waiting area of city hall must wear masks or face coverings. If persons do not have a mask/face covering, one will be provided subject to availability. There are ground markers that are six feet apart inside the lobby. Only those handling actual business are allowed in city hall, (no extra people allowed, except in the case of juveniles or those with disabilities). All social distancing requirements will be clearly marked. Hand sanitizer will be available inside and outside the lobby area, and in the break room or other work areas for employees. In the council chambers or courtroom, seating will be limited to 25% capacity, and will be marked to designate proper social distancing. Only seating in every other row will be allowed and clearly marked. The Court will attempt to conduct any court proceedings using FaceTime, Zoom, or by telephone/conference calls when legally possible.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedule is established to reduce occupancy in the court building. Only one court proceeding or hearing will be scheduled per day, unless it is a court matter that requires an essential in-person hearing.

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, docket 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 Municipal Court's website and in conspicuous locations around the court building, (a copy of which is attached).
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court in-person appearances will be accommodated by designating a separate time for such persons to appear, and which is limited only to persons who are in the vulnerable population.

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, have been closed to the public.
4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the seating area of any area utilized as a courtroom has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of any such courtroom area will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
5. The seating in the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.
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 will be available at the entrances to the building, outside of each courtroom or area utilized as a 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 CDC and Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations in Huntington City Hall.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, City Clerks at the front desk, or other designated city employees, 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. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including face masks and gloves.

Face Coverings

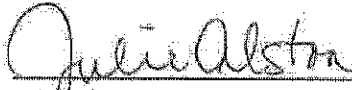
1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering, a disposable face covering will be provided, subject to availability.
3. Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for over 1 hour will be provided masks and required to wear them while in the court building if the supply is available.

Cleaning

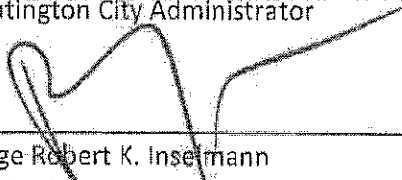
1. The lobby and courtroom/council chambers will be cleaned prior to and immediately after any meetings or hearings, and the lobby area and areas for employees will be cleaned periodically throughout the day. Hand sanitizer will be made available inside and outside the lobby area, and in the break room or other work areas for employees.
2. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

I have attempted to confer with other judges of courts with courtrooms in Angelina County regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority, the Huntington City Administrator, and the Angelina county judge, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that any judge who presides over courtrooms in the Huntington City Hall building will comply with this Operating Plan and conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: July 27, 2020


Julie Alston
Presiding Judge of Municipal Court


Bill Stewart
Huntington City Administrator


Judge Robert K. Inseman
Local Administrative District Judge

 July 29, 2020

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

People are vulnerable if:

- over age 65

- or

- serious underlying health conditions exist, such as:
 - high blood pressure
 - lung disease
 - diabetes
 - obesity
 - asthma

 - or
 - compromised immune system

 - or
 - under chemotherapy or similar therapy

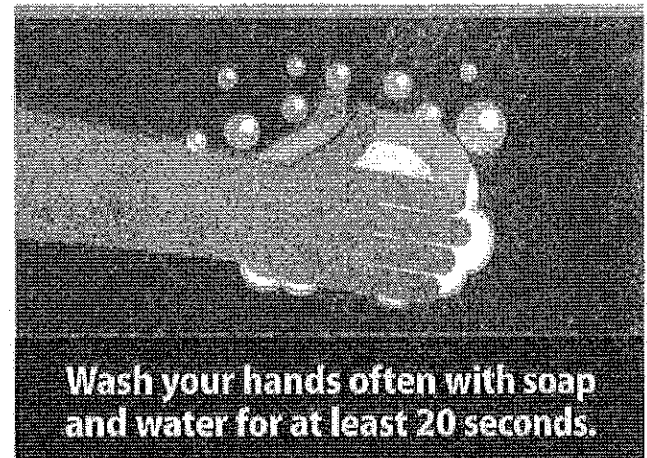
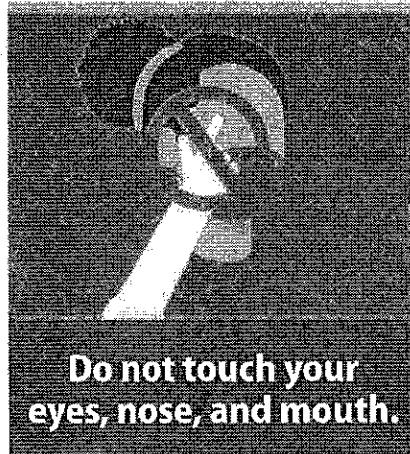
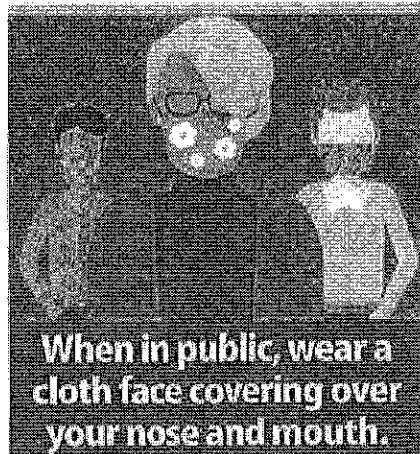
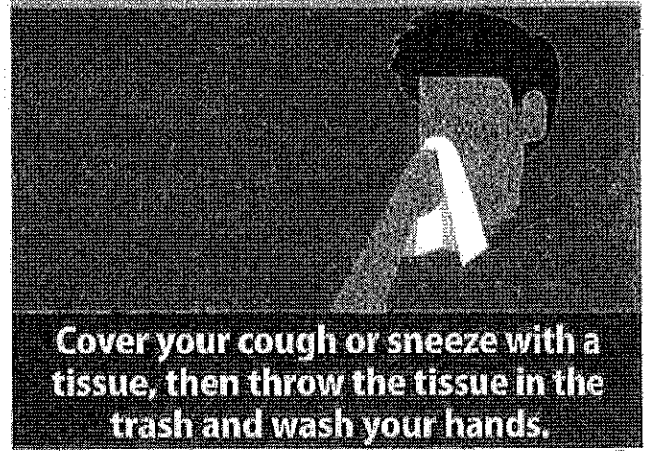
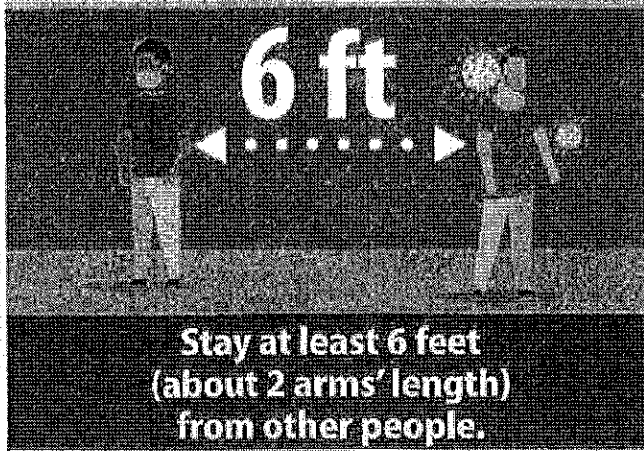
CONTACT THE COURT BEFORE ANY HEARING

Judge Julie Alston—Municipal Court—(936) 422-4195

Dana Howell, Municipal Court Clerk—(936) 422-4195

Stop the Spread of Germs

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

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