

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Town of Indian Lake Municipal Court, Cameron County, Texas

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 Town of Indian Lake 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. The Judge 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 Town.
4. The Judge will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 25, 2020

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. The Judge and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible.
2. The Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: The Judge and Court Staff will confer regularly to assess the effectiveness of the COVID-19 Operating Plan.
3. The Judge 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: Poster's will be displayed throughout the building reminding all persons entering the building of how to protect themselves and others.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
The schedule will remain the same, the last Thursday of the month unless an additional court date is needed to accommodate vulnerable defendants or there is an influx of tickets to be placed on a docket.

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.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by providing assistance over the phone, by email, or scheduling a videoconference the Judge. If the person does not have access to a computer or smartphone, arrangements will be made so that they can appear through videoconference.

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. Only the person with court business will be permitted to enter the building unless the person has children with him or her, or is a person of a vulnerable population.
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. A Police Officer will ensure that only one person will enter each restroom at a time unless assistance is needed for that person.

Community Hall Area

4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the Community Hall waiting area of the court has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
5. The Community Hall waiting area of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing and there will only be 12 persons allowed in the seating area and will be spaced at least 6 feet apart. If the person has children with him or her, or is a person of a vulnerable population than additional seats will be provided to accommodate. All other people will have to wait outside in their cars until a space is available inside.

The Judges Bench

6. The Judge will only be available remotely via videoconference. A tablet will be provided to the defendant in a separate area set aside for the defendant to plea his or her case via teleconference with the Judge. The tablet will be disinfected in between each use by court staff.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building and at the table provided for teleconferencing.
2. Tissues have been placed at the entrance to the building and at the table provided for teleconferencing.
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, a police officer or court clerk 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, a police officer or court clerk 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 court building.
3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including masks and gloves.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face covering 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 supply is available.

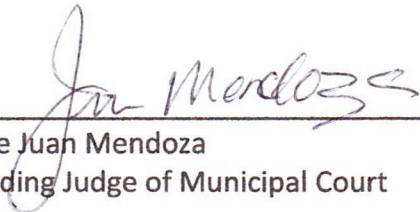
Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building, including entry and exit handles, chairs, and table tops before and after each in-person court docket.
2. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
3. Court building cleaning staff will wear appropriate personal protective equipment for cleaning the common areas of the courtroom.

Other

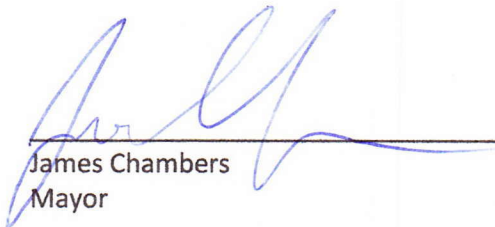
In developing this plan, I consulted with the Mayor and Emergency Management Coordinator. The Court Administrator will be responsible for implementing this plan throughout the building consistent with Town directives. I will ensure that in-person proceeding in the courtroom covered by this Operating Plan are conducted consistent with the plan.

Date: 6/17/2020

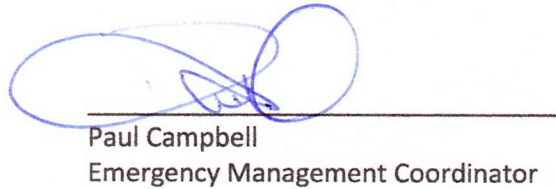


Judge Juan Mendoza
Presiding Judge of Municipal Court

Approved by:



James Chambers
Mayor



Paul Campbell
Emergency Management Coordinator