

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the La Grange 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 City of La Grange 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 will adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than August 10, 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 below the steps put in place.
3. 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. Judge and court staff while in the courtroom will required wear face coverings and are required to practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: The court, will stagger the times of cases set to minimize contact. Additional court days and special settings may be created to alleviate the backlog of cases.

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. 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).
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by special settings. Preferably remotely.

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. The 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.

Gallery

4. The capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
5. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

Well

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 dispensers have been placed inside the entrance to the courtroom and outside bathroom.
2. Tissues have been placed inside the entrance to the courtroom and at the witness stand and at the judges' bench.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in inside the entrance to the courtroom.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the courtroom, the 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 courtroom, the bailiff 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.
3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including masks, hand sanitizer and gloves.

Face Coverings

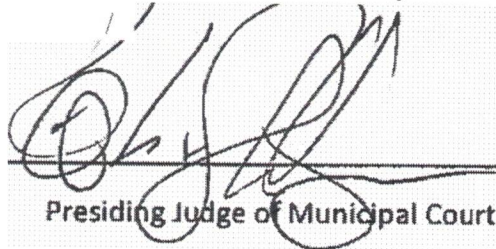
1. All individuals entering the court building are required to wear face coverings at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided, if available.

Cleaning

1. Courtroom cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every twice/day
2. Courtroom cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms between every hearing and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
3. Courtroom 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 reviewed with this Operating Plan with those working in the courtroom. 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 as the judge of court within this courtroom covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/20/2020



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court