

**CITY OF LA VERNIA
P.O. BOX 225
LA VERNIA, TEXAS 78121-0225
830-779-4541 Metro/Fax 830-253-1198**

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the La Vernia Municipal Court, Wilson County

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 La Vernia Municipal Court 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 July 17, 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: Health Screening will be done each day and before each court session.
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.0°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: In case a Judge or court staff has any of the above symptoms they will be sent home. The Judge or court staff will not be allowed to return to work unless the individual obtains a medical professional note clearing the individual for return.

6. Plexiglas guards for the judge, clerk, and witness table will be installed in the court room to protect staff. Clerks at the front counter are currently protected by an enclosed glass.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Court dates will be scheduled on the 3rd Friday of the month beginning at 9:00 a.m. Only one person in the court lobby at a time. Walk- ins will not be allowed during court days unless they are just paying for the citation.

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. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by being seated first and will be seen first.

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.

Gallery

3. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of the courtroom has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by city staff.
4. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing. No seating will be allowed in any area of the court's walkway.

Well

5. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk, 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 entrance to the building, outside of the courtroom, and clerks counter.
2. Tissues have been placed at the witness stand, and the court counter.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations of the courts common area.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter any common court area of the building on court dates, the bailiffs or court security will ask the individuals if they are feeling feverish, have a cough, sore throat , body aches, problems breathing, loss of taste or smell, joint pain or nausea/vomiting/diarrhea 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 denied admittance to the court building.
2. When individuals attempt to enter any common court area of the building, the bailiffs or court security will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.0°F will be denied admittance to the court.
3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the courts common area will be provided personal protective equipment, including face mask and disposable gloves.

Face Coverings

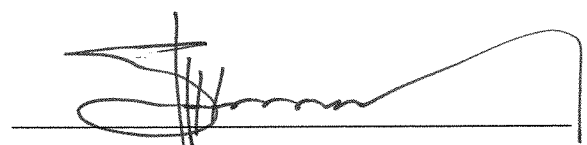
1. All individuals entering any part of the courts common area will be required to wear a face covering at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring face covering with them, if the individual does not have a face covering, one may be provided.

Cleaning

1. Court cleaning staff will clean the court window after every person that comes in contact with the area.
2. Court cleaning staff will clean the courtroom before and after each session.
3. Court 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.
5. Each pen at the clerk's window will be sanitized with the appropriate cleaning supplies.

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 judges in the La Vernia Municipal Court covered by this Operating Plan will conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/19/2020



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court