

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Lake Jackson Municipal Court of Record, Brazoria 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 courts of **Lake Jackson** will implement the following protective measures:

A. 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 in person, or in the alternative, to conduct proceedings as needed 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 June 23, 2020

B. Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: On a daily basis as listed below.
2. 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.
3. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings and practice social distancing, and other reasonable hygiene methods during hearings.
4. Protective Measures: Judges and court staff shall wash hands and disinfect the area after each transaction with face to face interaction at the window or in the courtroom, especially where touching papers or other articles are necessary.

C. Dockets after June 1, 2020

1. A limited number of defendants approximately thirty (30), will be allowed in the lobby or courtroom with consideration for social distancing at six feet minimum distance between each participant. The lobby area and courtroom will be sanitized after each court session.
2. Defendants will be seated in the Courtroom at designated spaces on the benches For Example: the Courtroom has sixteen (16) benches for seating. Row or bench number one (1) will seat two (2) individuals, row or bench number two (2) will seat one (1) individual each at designated spots. Six (6) more individuals will be seated in the hallway. Staff will let the individuals in the hallway into the courtroom where there is room for them to be seated.
3. Consideration will be given to those with small children or others necessary to accommodate a defendant.

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 in conspicuous locations around the court building.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by any reasonable accommodations including special court settings and/or video conferencing, or other telephonic or electronic methods.

D. 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.

Gallery

2. 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 court staff (See Paragraph C. 2. above).

Well

3. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.

E. Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed in the lobby and at the area in front of the Judge's bench.
2. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted.

F. Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court courtroom, the 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 courtroom, the staff 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 for a minimum of 14 days.
3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including face coverings, gloves, and hand sanitizer.

G. Face Coverings

1. Face coverings or masks are required for any person entering the building, lobby and courtroom Court staff will make masks available to any person as needed.

H. Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned appropriately .
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms between every session and 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.

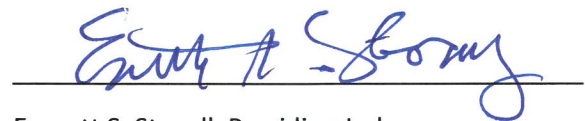
4. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

J. Other

In the event this Operating Plan is unworkable or becomes unnecessary for any reason the Presiding Judge reserves the right to amend this Operating Plan and will notify the mayor and court staff prior to any court proceeding or within 24 hours whichever is the shortest time period.

I have conferred with all judges of courts, court personnel, Brazoria County Health Department and Mayor regarding this Operating Plan. I will ensure that the judges of courts and Staff follow this Operating Plan and conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/ 26/ 2020



Everett S. Stovall, Presiding Judge

City of Lake Jackson Municipal Court