

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Lewisville Municipal Court

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 Lewisville 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, when possible.
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 1, 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:
 - continue to monitor directives and guidance from City of Lewisville leadership and Texas Office of Court Administration;
 - ensure that all Court personnel are following COVID-19 precautions regarding social distancing measures and appropriate respiratory etiquette.
 - continue to voluntarily screen employees for fever;
 - monitor employees and refer those employees for testing if they present with signs of COVID-19 infection (fever, fatigue or tiredness, dry cough) or having known close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19. Anyone with positives signed will not be permitted to enter the building and will be directed to seek medical advice;
 - encourage wear face coverings while interacting with the public at the public service window;
3. Protective Measures: Judges and Court Staff will follow CDC and Texas DHS recommendations;
4. Reduce the number of public entrances (from 3 to 2) into the Courthouse and clearly designate entry and exit points for staff and the public;
5. Encourage defendants to resolve their court matters through alternative contact points (i.e., phone, mail or using the drop box);

6. Implement interim modified standing orders to encourage/increase the number of cases resolved on-line or at the public service windows;
7. Refer anyone wanting to pay their fines to the on-line payment option; (The Payment Group)
8. Resume confirming on Class C arrest warrants beginning July 1, 2020.

Scheduling

The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:

1. Judiciary and Court Staff:
 - Group 1 / Week 1 - M, W, F; Group 1 / Week 2 - T, Th;
 - Group 2 / Week 1 - T, TH; Group 2 / Week 2 - M, W, F;
2. General Public:
 - reduce the number of defendants in the courthouse with the use of the NEMO-Q queuing software;
 - limit in-person dockets for essential proceedings only, or for those cases that cannot be accomplished remotely (i.e., for defendants with limited/no internet or mobile phone access).
3. Jury Trials will not resume until after July 1, 2020.

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 reasonable accommodations. A notice with this information will be posted on the 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 will be accommodated by special docket settings upon request.

Social Distancing

Courthouse

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. No more than two individuals not from the same household will be permitted in an elevator. If more than one individual from the same household is in an elevator, no other individuals will be permitted in the elevator.
3. Public common areas will be posted with appropriate signage requiring adherence to social distancing directives;
4. Breakrooms will remain closed to the public.

Courtroom Gallery

5. The maximum number of persons permitted in the courtroom gallery is 25, exclusive of the court staff. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
6. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating and seating is designated with appropriate markings.

Courtroom Well

7. A podium will be installed in the courtroom and used when addressing the court;
8. In the courtroom, counsel tables, the witness stand, the judge's bench, and clerk and bailiff seating have been arranged to ensure social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed outside of the courtroom and at the public service windows.
2. Tissues have been placed at counsel tables, at the witness stand, and on the judges' benches.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs" flyer has been posted in multiple locations in the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, city personnel 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, city personnel 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 courtroom will be provided personal protective equipment, including gloves and a mask.

Face Coverings

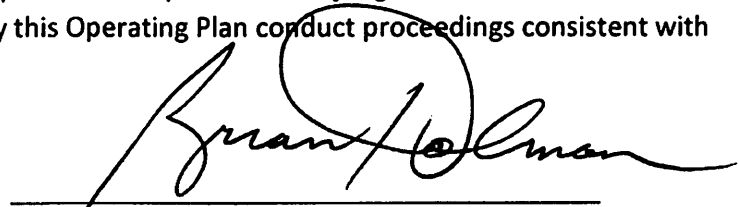
1. All individuals entering the courtroom will be required to wear face coverings at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided.
3. Individuals who will be required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

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least daily.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms 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.

I have attempted to confer with all judges using the courtroom in the court building regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority and mayor, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will require that the judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/27/2020



Brian Holman
Presiding Judge of Municipal Court