

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Liberty Municipal Court Judiciary

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the court area of the City of Liberty Municipal Court, the City of Liberty Municipal Court (hereinafter referred to as "the 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 term "judges" as used in this document shall mean the presiding judge, associate judges, and visiting judges for the City of Liberty Municipal Court.
4. The term "the court area" as used in this document shall mean any area of the City of Liberty complex located at 1829 Sam Houston, Liberty, Texas, which is being used for court proceedings of any nature by personnel of the Court, including, but not necessarily limited to, judges, court clerk, deputy court clerk, city prosecutor, and court bailiff(s).
5. The presiding judge of the Court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and mayor and will adjust this operating plan as necessary consistent with conditions in the city.
6. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than July 1, 2020

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: The presiding judge, the court clerk, and the deputy court clerk will hold weekly meetings or teleconferences in order to monitor the ongoing efficacy of this plan.
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 court area and should seek medical advice.
3. While in the court area, judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations which are consistent with current city policies at all times.
4. Protective Measures: Hand sanitizer will be provided to staff.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court area:
All hearings and proceedings will occur remotely, if possible, and any hearings or proceedings that are in-person will always be held with appropriate social distancing. Hearings, dockets, and trials will be scheduled in such a manner as to maintain no more than the number of persons in the court area consistent with the social distancing requirements found within this plan as well as local and state mandates.

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 for any reason(s) including, but not limited to, disease and medical treatment are considered to be vulnerable populations.
2. Each judge will include information on orders setting hearings, docket notices, and in other court communications which notifies individuals who are in vulnerable populations of the requirement and ability to contact the court in order to identify themselves as vulnerable individuals.
3. Vulnerable individuals who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by remote means, if possible, and otherwise, by individual scheduling of any court proceedings involving vulnerable individuals.

Social Distancing

1. All persons not from the same household who are permitted in the court area will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet.
2. The maximum capacity of the court area will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
3. The gallery of the courtroom when open will be marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating will be limited to every other row.
4. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, clerk seating, and bailiff seating will be arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.

Hygiene

1. Tissues will be available near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, and on the judge's bench. Hand sanitizer will be available near the door of the courtroom.
2. The Department of State Health Services' "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" will be posted in multiple locations in the building which contains the court area.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court area, a bailiff or court staff will ask the individuals the following: if they are feeling feverish; if they have a cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing; or if they have been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19. Individuals who respond in the affirmative to any of these questions will be refused admittance to the court area.
2. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court area will be provided personal protective equipment.
3. If there is any concern, the court and the court staff will have the ability to use and/or direct the use of a thermal thermometer to check anyone's temperature coming into the court area in a safe manner.

Face Coverings

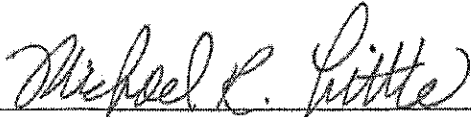
1. All individuals entering the court area will wear face coverings at all times.

Cleaning

1. City of Liberty building cleaning staff and/or other available City of Liberty employees will clean and sanitize the common areas of the court area. This cleaning and sanitizing will be routinely and more regularly performed, including when a transition of participants occurs within the courtroom between hearings and during recesses.
2. Cleaning and sanitizing supplies will be provided which are effective against the COVID-19 virus.

In developing this COVID-19 Operating Plan, I consulted with the local health authority and mayor, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that any associate or visiting judges who conduct proceedings in the court area covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: June 2, 2020



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court



Allen Anderson 6/11/2020