

## **COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Madisonville 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 courts of

**Madisonville** 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. The Judge will conduct all proceedings remotely unless a defendant notifies the Court, in writing, that it is impossible for them to do so due to an inability to obtain technical equipment or a physical disability. The Judge will not allow anyone to appear in person unless they meet this criteria.
3. The presiding judge of the municipal court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and mayor to adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than January 1, 2021

### **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: Temperatures will be taken of all Judges, Court Staff, and City Prosecutor upon entering of building for the day.
3. 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.
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: Judge, Prosecutor, and Court Staff will have gloves, hand sanitizer, and masks available. Bullet resistant glass separates Court Staff from public for payments of citations. Hand sanitizer is placed in lobby, as well as counters and courtroom. Floor stickers have been placed to maintain social distancing in the lobby. Options continue to be available for defendants in the forms of drive-thru window, phone, and internet to handle citations.

### **Scheduling**

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

Court will begin promptly at 10 am. Each defendant will be required to sign in upon arrival and document name, address, and current telephone number. Each defendant will remain in his/her car until the Court Staff calls. The Court Staff will allow ONE defendant in the court room at a time. Each case will be given 15 minutes and court room will be sanitized after each case. No additional guest will be allowed in with defendant except for legal representation and/or witnesses. A juvenile defendant shall be accompanied by only parents/guardians and no additional guests. The courtroom will not exceed 50% at any given time.

### **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 being the first defendant called upon for Court Hearing unless it can be resolved with a conference call with the Judge, City Prosecutor, and Court Clerk.

### **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.
3. Public common areas, including breakrooms and snack rooms, have been closed to the public.

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4. 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 at the entrances to the building, outside of elevators on each floor, outside of each courtroom, and outside of bathrooms.
2. Tissues have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, on the judges' benches, and in the hallways.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations on each floor of the court building.

### Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the Court 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 court building, a member of the Madisonville Police Department will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 99.6°F will be refused admittance to the court building.
3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including gloves and a mask.

### Face Coverings

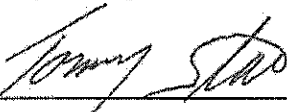
1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided.

### Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every two hours during court sessions.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms between every hearing, between morning and afternoon proceedings, 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.

I have attempted to confer with all judges of courts with courtrooms 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 ensure that the judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 12/29/2020



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Tommy Starns

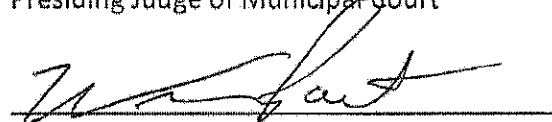
Presiding Judge of Municipal Court



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Donald Grooms

County Health Inspector



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William Parten

Mayor, City of Madisonville