

# **COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Hidalgo County, City of Mercedes 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 **City of Mercedes 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, the county judge 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: the Court will take regular temperature of everyone at the beginning of the work 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: everyone entering the building will use a mask.

## **Scheduling**

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: We will have a sign in sheet for all defendant that want to attend traffic court at 2:30 pm, on Wednesday afternoon (NOTE: Mercedes has court proceedings only on Wednesdays). They will be asked to wait outside until it's his/her turn to go into the court proceedings. There will be only 5 individuals allowed at a time in the courtroom. The list will be given to the clerk(s) on duty to be able to prepare the cases for the Judge.

## 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 setting appointments for a specific day to be seen by the Judge.

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

## *Gallery*

5. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom has been determined and posted. 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. Seating is limited to 5 chairs and 6 feet between each chair.

## *Well*

7. 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 in the courtroom and outside of the courtroom.
2. Tissues have been placed in the courtroom 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 of the court building.

### Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, Court Administrator or Bailiff 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, Court Administrator or Bailiff 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. Inmates being transported from the jail to the court building will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and have their temperature taken prior to transport. Inmates with symptoms or a temperature equal to or above 99.6°F will not be transported to the court building.
4. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including medical (facial) mask and disposable gloves.

### Face Coverings

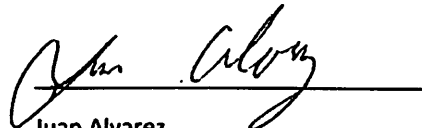
1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear facial masking at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them.
3. Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for over 1 hour will be provided surgical masks and required 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 every hour or the end of every court session.
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.

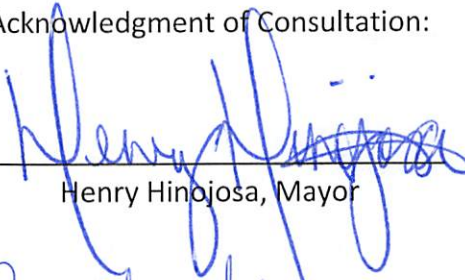
I have conferred with the Presiding Judge, court staff, the City Health Inspector and the Mayor regarding this Operating Plan. I will ensure that all court staff covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan. The Mayor and City Health Inspector have signed below acknowledging their consultation.

Date: 6/2/2020



Juan Alvarez,  
Presiding Judge of Municipal Court  
City of Mercedes, Texas

Acknowledgment of Consultation:



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Henry Hinojosa, Mayor



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Bernardo Mata, City Health Official



Individuals who are over the age of 65 or older that have a serious health conditions need to make contact with our court to set appointments for a court proceeding at  
(956)565-3114 Ext 170



Our Municipal Court will resume June 10, 2020 at 3:30 on Wednesday. Please call the office to (956)565-3114 Ext170 for further instructions before coming to court.

“You must wear a mask before entering building”





# CITY OF MERCEDES

## EOC

### Approved Work Safe Plan

THIS CERTIFIES THAT

Mercedes Municipal Court

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LOCATED AT

400 S Ohio, Mercedes TX 78570

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HAS COMPLIED WITH THE RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE  
EOC AND IS HEREBY GRANTED PERMISSION TO CONDUCT  
BUSINESS

Occupancy of 4

Issued by: Bernaldo Mata, Health Official

EOC Representative

Date: 06/03/2020



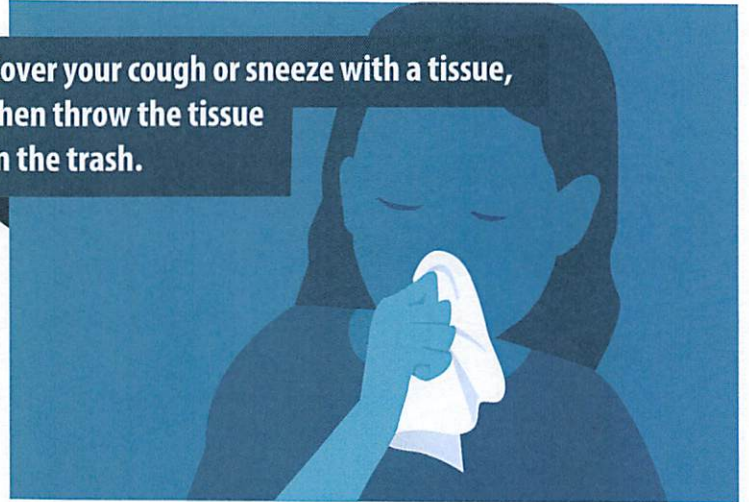
# STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



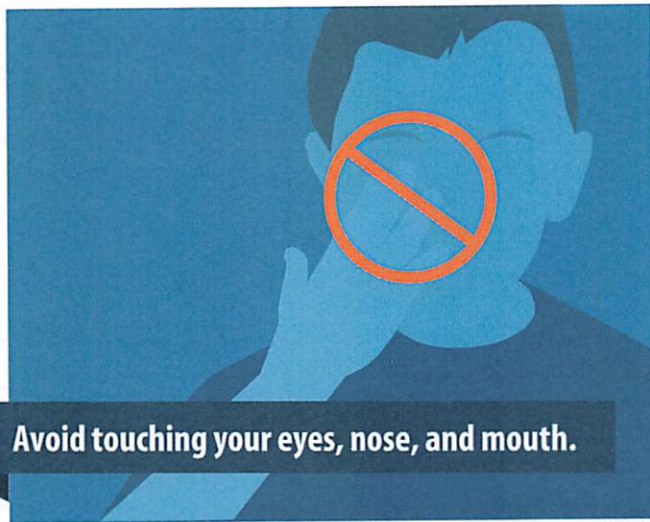
Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.



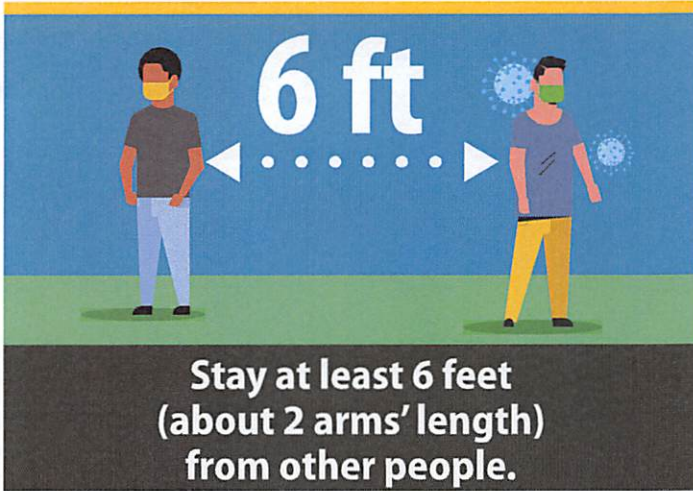
Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.





# Stop the Spread of Germs

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[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)