

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Midland 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 City of Midland 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 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. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: judges and court staff will self-monitor and comply with the provisions contained herein.
2. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.0°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 encouraged to wear face coverings, and required to practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times.
4. Protective Measures: social distancing will be enforced and marked off in the courtrooms, jury rooms, security checkpoints, and lobby areas. Staff will be spread out to encourage social distancing. Citizens entering the building will be informed of locations of hand sanitizer as well as reminded to stay six feet apart unless they are with family. All security checkpoint agents will wear protective coverings and security baskets will be sanitized twice a day.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
Reduce the number and size of all dockets, virtual court to be done once a day. There will be no more than five defendants for walk-in sessions.

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. Individuals who are in vulnerable populations will be encouraged to contact the Court for information and to receive appropriate accommodations.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by encouraging them to handle their cases by mail or by remote proceeding. There will also be a special docket reserved for vulnerable populations.

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. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
6. Court staff will enforce social distancing in the courtrooms. Seating is limited to every other row.

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 at the entrances to the building, at clerk stations at each available window, and is also available upon request.
2. Center for Disease Control's social distancing guidelines have been posted throughout the building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, building security 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. 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 100.00°F will not be transported to the court building.
3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including masks and gloves.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be encouraged 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 if requested.

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at regular intervals to remain sanitized.
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 informed 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: 5/29/2020



T.A. "Tim" Meek, Presiding Judge

City of Midland Municipal Court