

# **COVID-19 Operating Plan for The City of Robstown Municipal Court, Nueces County, Texas**

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the buildings housing the court, **The City of Robstown Municipal Court, Nueces County, Texas** will implement the following protective measures:

## **General**

1. Judge 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. Judge will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. The local administrative district judge will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and county judge and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the county.
4. Judge will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings in compliance with all orders issued by the Governor, the Texas Supreme Court, local government entities and/or the Office of Court Administration.

## **Judge and Court Staff Health**

1. Judge and court staff when feasible to perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: daily temperature check
3. Judge or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.4F, 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. Judge and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: Use of Zoom for hearings when possible ; setting notices will require defendants wear masks; staff will wear masks during court hearings; seating will be spaced 6 feet apart in courtroom and in waiting area; bailiff and or designated person at court hearing dates to take temperature of persons entering the building; and access to the court will only have one entrance unlocked with hand sanitizer placed before entry and temperature checks at entrance.

## **Scheduling**

1. Before September 1, 2020 we are not having any in-person hearings. We are using “Zoom” technology to conduct all hearings except trials.
2. Before September 1, 2020, any magistration duties including but not limited to issuing orders of emergency protection, orders of emergency apprehension and detention and/or juvenile magistration duties will be conducted in the “Customer Service” area of the court. (Please see the “Social Distancing” part of this plan # 8).
3. Once in-person hearings resume, the following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
  - a. Arraignments show cause hearings and pretrial hearings shall have no more than 5 defendants and/or defense attorneys scheduled per half hour and allowed in the Court Room. In addition to the 5 defendants and/or defense attorneys, the following people will be present in the court room: judge, court clerk and bailiff.
  - b. Trials before the court will not be scheduled prior to September 1, 2020, and/or when trials are scheduled, scheduling will be in compliance with any and all orders issued by the Governor, the Texas Supreme Court and/or the Office of Court Administration. When trials do resume, trials will be scheduled on a designated date with one defendant scheduled every hour. The court room will be occupied by no more than one defendant, one judge, one clerk, one prosecutor, one bailiff and no more than 3 other individuals. All individuals in the court room will be seated or standing six feet apart.
  - c. Jury trials will not be scheduled prior to September 1, 2020, and/or when trials are scheduled, scheduling will be in compliance with any and all orders issued by the Governor, the Texas Supreme Court, local governing entities and/or the Office of Court Administration. When jury trials do resume, trials will be scheduled on a designated date with one defendant scheduled in the morning and/or one defendant scheduled in the afternoon.

## **Vulnerable Populations**

1. Individuals who are over age 60 and individuals with underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, COPD, 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. 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 court’ 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 appear by Zoom if possible.

## **Social Distancing**

1. All persons 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.

### *Gallery Area*

4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of the courtroom is 5 and it has been posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
5. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row to accommodate 6 feet between persons.
6. Alternatively, hearings will be available on a posted YouTube link.

### *Well Area*

7. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, clerk and bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space. In addition, counsel tables will have safety glass partitions between them and the gallery area. The witness stand will have a safety glass partition with a document slot directly in front of the witness. The judge's bench will have a safety glass partition with a document slot directly in front of the bench. The judge's bench will have a safety glass partition between the judge and the witness and judge and the court clerk. The court clerk will have a safety glass partition directly in front of them.

### *Customer Service Area*

8. No more than two people are permitted in the cashier window area and will be social distanced 6 feet between persons. Court staff will be situated in the administrative area of the Court behind a wall with glass windows with document slots and microphone/speaker hardware. Staff is to wear face masks and wear gloves when engaging persons in this area.

## **Hygiene**

1. Hand sanitizer will be placed at the entrances to the building and/or outside of the court room and of restrooms.
2. Tissues or paper towels will be 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 of the court building.

## **Screening**

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the bailiff, court staff or court designated person 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, the bailiff or a court staff will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.4°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 masks and gloves.

### Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will always be required to wear face coverings.
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 staff or other designated persons will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every 3 hours.
2. Court 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 will be trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

### Other

The presiding judge has attempted to and/or has conferred with and has given notice to all judges of the court regarding this Covid19 Operating Plan. In developing the plan, the presiding judge has attempted to consult with the local health authority and Mayor or City Manager, documentation of which is attached to this plan. Should there be non-availability of the Court room because of conflict with events or orders regarding the building where the Courtroom is located by the Mayor, City Council, City Manager or Health officials, the Court shall utilize Zoom to conduct hearings. Judges of the court covered by this Operating Plan will conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 07/15/2020

  
Hon. Antonio B. Gonzalez – Presiding Judge

# NOTICE

## REGARDING VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

**Vulnerable individuals** are those over age 60 and individuals with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma and those with immune systems that are compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy.

If you are such such an individual, or a caregiver for such an individual, who needs to make other arrangements regarding your court appearance, you can contact court staff by telephone at 361-387-4589 option 4, by email at [rmc@cityofrobstown.com](mailto:rmc@cityofrobstown.com) or my mail at 101 E. Main Ave., Robstown, Tx 78380



## **Certificate of Conference**

I certify that I have conferred, or made a reasonable attempt to confer, with all individuals which are listed below about contents of the Robstown Municipal Court Operating Plan:

**Gilbert Gomez**-Mayor for the City of Robstown

**Agrees**

**Salvador Ochoa**-City Secretary for the City of Robstown

**Agrees**

**Annette Rodriguez**-Health Director for the Corpus Christi Nueces County Public Health District

**Agrees**



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Antonio B. Gonzalez  
Judge-Robstown Municipal Court