

Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)
Pandemic/Infections Disease Plan for
the City of San Juan Municipal Court, Hidalgo County Judiciary

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 San Juan 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 October 7, 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: All Judges and Court Staff shall (1) wash their hands frequently as necessary, (2) wear gloves (3) wear recommended mask (see attachment) (4) Have their temperature check conducted upon each entering to the court area.
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: Glass has been installed around the court room bench. In addition; safe shields, latex gloves, and disposable masks are for their use, and wearing mask for all judges and court staff use.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: All in person hearings must be held in-person. Court will allow one defendant, their Attorney, and one witness to be present in the court room. Court room will eliminate the number of occupants no more than five for court hearing. The court will allow only two individuals to occupy the lobby waiting area. All individual who are scheduled for hearings will be instructed to remain in their vehicle until acknowledge.

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 case by case basis (1) Court will make available appropriate disposable face masks (2) Provide Hand sanitizer, tissue, and comfortable chairs (3) Implement social distancing as required/suggested by medical experts (4) Conduct visitor temperature checks (5) Vulnerable populations may also be accommodated through remote means either through Zoom, Skype, Webex or other virtual platform.

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 snackrooms, have been closed to the public.

Gallery

5. The maximum number of persons permitted in each courtroom has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
6. The courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row in the court.

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 court lobby counter area of the building, outside of each courtroom lobby.
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 lobby.
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 City Marshal and staff 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, City Marshal and staff 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 face masks, latex gloves, and plastic face shields.

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 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 building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned every Monday – Friday in the mornings and every afternoon.
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.

Other


As additional information becomes available additional protective equipment may be provided and additional procedures may be implemented.

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 of Hidalgo County and the City of San Juan mayor, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the judges of courts with courtrooms in the court area of the building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.


Signed this 29th day of September, 2020



Eloy Hernandez
Presiding Judge of Municipal Court

Approved: 
Hon. Mario Garza
Mayor of the City of San Juan

Date: 10-7-, 2020

Approved: 
Tirso Garza
City of San Juan Fire Chief

Date: 10/8/2020, 2020