

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Sealy Municipal Court 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 Sealy Municipal, 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 and surrounding area.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than September 1, 2020
5. Under the SCOTX Emergency Order 26, effective October 1st, no in-person jury trials are permitted in municipal courts until December 1st, 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 presiding judge and court administrator will hold regular meetings with court staff regarding the implementation of this Operating Plan. The court will also stay current on all recommendations and updates published by the Office of Court Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Texas Department of Health Services.
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: Face coverings, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant have been provided to each staff member and work stations are routinely sanitized throughout the day. All work stations currently meet the 6 ft recommended social distancing guidelines.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
Remote hearings are being held unless a party is absolutely not able to connect remotely. Those individuals will be placed on a docket to come in-person. These in-person dockets will be limited to no more than 10 people (including staff) in court chambers at a time. All individuals will be arranged to meet the 6 ft social distancing requirement. Court staff is also processing cases by telephone, mail, and electronically whenever possible.

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 contacting the Court Administrator and setting up a suitable alternative such as a telephone conference or scheduled for a private docket if necessary.

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 snackrooms, have been closed to the public.
4. Staff is separated from defendants visiting the lobby by bullet proof windows.
5. Signage is posted prior to entering the lobby stating only one person is allowed in the lobby at one time.

Gallery

6. 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.
7. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to a minimum of 6 ft in all directions, not to exceed the 10 person maximum.

Well

8. 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.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed in the lobby and defendants are directed to use prior to assisting. It will also be made available prior to entering chambers. Public restrooms are equipped with hand sanitizer and disinfectant spray.
2. Tissues have been placed in the lobby, at the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, and on the judges' benches.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations throughout the lobby, chambers, and restrooms.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter court chambers, the 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 court chambers, the 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. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, disinfectant and any other deemed necessary for their protection.

Face Coverings

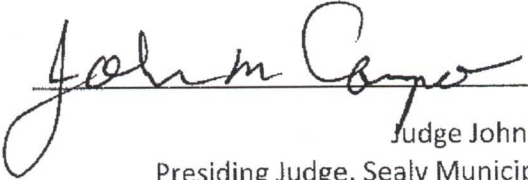
1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided.
3. Individuals who will be required to be in court chambers 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 day and between defendants when time allows.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtroom between hearings and between dockets.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.

I have conferred with all judges 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 who use court chambers in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 9/3/2020

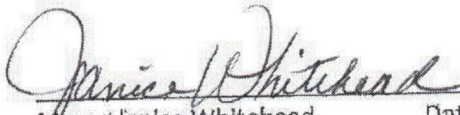


Judge John Campos
Presiding Judge, Sealy Municipal Court


**City of Sealy
Municipal Court**

415 Main Street | P.O. Box 517
Sealy, TX 77474
Phone: 979-885-6733 | Fax: 979-885-4784

Per the Office of Court Administration, I must file an Operating Plan with the Regional Administrative Presiding Judge before the Court can begin scheduling dockets. A requirement of this plan is that I have conferred with the city's local health authority and the mayor regarding the plan provisions. Accordingly, I am forwarding to you a copy of the proposed Operating Plan for the City of Sealy Municipal Court.

 9/22/2020

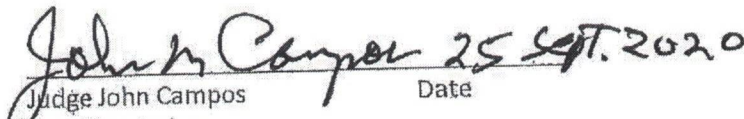
Mayor Janice Whitehead Date
jwhitehead@ci.sealy.tx.us

 9-11-2020

City Local Health Authority Date
Dr. Don Bosse
dbosse@bellvillemc.org

I am available to discuss this plan further at any time. My cell phone number is 979-398-1419.

Thank you,

 25 Sept. 2020

Judge John Campos Date
Presiding Judge
Sealy Municipal Court
Austin County, TX

COVID-19 VULNERABLE POPULATIONS NOTICE

If you are:

- Over age 65; or
- Have a serious underlying health condition, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity; or
- Have an immune system compromised by chemotherapy or cancer; or
- Have another condition requiring therapy,

Please contact the Court Administrator, Fawn Mackey, at 979-627-6109 to discuss alternate accommodations.