

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Seguin's Municipal Court Building

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, Judges, and other individuals entering the court building, the City of Seguin's Municipal Court will therefore implement the following protective measures:

General

1. The Judge and Court Staff will attempt to 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. The Judge and Court Staff will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. The presiding judge of the municipal court and/or the clerk of the court will maintain regular communications with the local health authority, the county judge and mayor adjusting this Operating Plan as necessary with conditions in the county and city.
4. The Judge will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 9, 2020

Judge, Court Staff, and Defendant Health

1. The Court Staff who can perform the non-essential functions remotely will be encouraged to telework.
2. The Judge, Court Staff and City personnel operating in the court building will be monitored as follows: Temperatures will be taken and recorded daily, together with logging any unusual health conditions and status.
3. The Judge, Court Staff and City personnel operating in the court building 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. Judge, Court Staff and City personnel operating in the court building shall practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hand washing and hygiene at all times.
5. Protective Measures: Defendants will be required to wear a face mask or cloth face covering when entering the court building, including the courtroom.

6. Face masks will be provided to Defendants who do not already possess a mask or face covering when entering the court building.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Clerks will schedule no more than 10 defendants in 15-minute increments. Court Security will monitor the number of people in the building during court sessions.

Vulnerable Populations

1. Vulnerable Populations will be defined as 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.
2. The Judge will cause Court Staff to 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 and who request to be kept away from the general population of Defendants in the court building will be accommodated by making a special appointment to see the Judge or the Prosecutor.

Social Distancing

1. All persons not from the same household who are in the court building will be required to maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet.
2. Chairs in the courtroom shall be arranged so that social distancing requirements of at least 6 feet exist between seated Defendants. Empty spacing chairs shall be marked accordingly.
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 and/or Court Security.

6. The gallery of the courtroom will be been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited so that Defendants are not less than six feet from each other.

Well

7. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, Judge's bench, clerk, and bailiff seating shall be 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 court building, outside the courtroom, and outside of bathrooms.
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 hallways.
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 persons attempt to enter the court building, the Court Staff and/or Court Security will ask the individuals if they are feeling feverish, have a cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, loss of taste or smell, joint pain, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea; 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 persons attempt to enter the court building, the Court Staff and/or Court Security will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 99.6°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. Court Staff and/or Court Security 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 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 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 4 hours.
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 flu and coronavirus.
4. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

This Operating Plan is a result of communications with Court Staff, Court Security and other City agencies in the court building. This Operating Plan was derived through communications with the local health authority, the county judge and mayor. All City personnel who were consulted regarding this Operating Plan have agreed that they will attempt to ensure that all court building activities are subject to this Operating Plan and are conducted in a manner consistent with the Operating Plan. Furthermore, all City personnel who were consulted regarding this Operating Plan have agreed that they will preserve this Operating Plan until the Office of Court Administration instructs otherwise or until this virus threat is mitigated.

Date: 5/28/2020



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court