

## **COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Socorro City 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 court of **the City of Socorro** will implement the following protective measures:

### **General**

1. The Socorro Municipal 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. The Socorro Municipal Judge will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. The Socorro Municipal Judge will maintain regular communication with the local health authority, city manager and Socorro City Council to adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. The Socorro Municipal Judge will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 1, 2020

### **Judge and Court Staff Health**

1. Judge and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: Self-monitoring will be important. The Judge and Court Staff will take their temperatures prior to arriving at the court and will immediately disclose any signs or symptoms of COVID-19. Face Coverings will be mandatory and hand sanitizer is available.
3. Judge 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. 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: Face coverings are mandatory in public areas; temperatures will be monitored before and after the work day; gloves will be worn by staff handling documents; social distancing will be enforced; hearings will be made by appointment as much as possible to limit the amount of people in the courthouse; work stations, counter area, and seating areas will be sanitized at least once every hour.

### **Scheduling**

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Video hearings will be held as often as practicable. There will be a limited number of defendants in the courtroom and those will be by appointment. There will be designated seating areas that will comply with the six feet apart recommendation by the CDC; If the limit of individuals is reached, defendants will be asked to wait outside or in their vehicles until others leave. If individuals other than defendants appear, they will be asked to wait outside.

### **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. 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 making individual appointments so that only that person will be in the courtroom at that time. Video hearings will be held as much as practicable. If needed, rescheduling these cases will be an option.

### **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 snack rooms, have been closed to the public.

### ***Gallery***

4. 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.
5. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

### ***Well***

6. In each 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 is available upon request.
2. Tissues have been placed in the front lobby and on the judge's bench.
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. Before entering the courtroom, 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. Before entering the courtroom, the Bailiff will use a 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 courtroom will be provided personal protective equipment, including mask, gloves, and sanitizer.

### **Face Coverings**

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times.
2. Individuals will be required to wear surgical masks or other cloth face coverings when entering the court building.

### **Cleaning**

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every 1-2 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 coronavirus.
4. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

### **Other**

1. Face coverings will be worn by the Judge and personnel in the courtroom; prosecutor and officers must wear face coverings if they are in the courtroom.
2. Plexiglass dividers are already installed in the front lobby, separating the court staff from the public.
3. Markings will be placed on the floors and on the courtroom pews, enforcing social distancing.

In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority and Socorro City Council, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that I and the Socorro Municipal staff conduct proceedings consistent with the Operating Plan.

Date: 6/4/2020

W. Velarde R

Presiding Judge of Municipal Court

Elia Garcia

Elia Garcia, Mayor



ATTEST:

Olivia Navarro

Olivia Navarro, City Clerk