

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Van, Van Zandt County Judiciary

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the building housing the court, the court of the City of Van 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 when appropriate.
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 June 15, 2020

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judges and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely may telework when possible and only with prior approval.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring requirements are temperature checks upon entering the building each morning and self-monitoring and reporting of COVID-19 symptoms. Judges and court staff will make every reasonable effort to comply with the health requirements set out in this plan.
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.2°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 practice social distancing and follow appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times. Face coverings are recommended and optional, and disposable masks are provided upon request.
5. Protective Measures: Face coverings, hand sanitizers and disinfecting wipes are provided for all staff and Judges. Each payment window is protected by glass.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Scheduling appearances at least 1 hour apart.

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.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by:
 - a. Rescheduling their attendance until the crisis has diminished, if appropriate.
 - b. Scheduling appearances before other cases.
 - c. Allowing them to appear remotely, if appropriate.
 - d. Providing them with protective personal equipment, such as a face covering, if appropriate and if supplies are available.
 - e. Allowing them to submit necessary information in writing when allowed by the existing law.

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. Public common areas, including break rooms, have been and will remain closed to the public.
3. Side doors will be utilized to eliminate contact with other offices and staff
4. The public has been notified through signage that only one person at a time will be allowed in the lobby.

Courtroom 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.
6. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating.

Courtroom Well

7. In each courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, clerk and bailiff seating will be arranged in such a way to ensure social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space when possible.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at each window, inside the court room, at each desk and in each bathroom.
2. Tissues have been placed in the courtroom and in each office.

3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations in the building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, Bailiff or Court Clerk will provide a questionnaire that will ask the individuals if they have traveled outside the U.S. in the last 7 days or been in close contact with anyone who has traveled outside the U.S. in the last 7 days; 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 may be refused admittance to the court building.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, Bailiff or Court Clerk will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.2°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 face coverings, gloves, hand sanitizers and disinfecting wipes, and, if requested and available, face shields.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be encouraged to wear face coverings. If the individual does not have a personal face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided.

Cleaning


1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every eight (8) hours.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtroom between every proceeding 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. The lobby has been cleared out of bookshelves, stands and any items that may provide a potential surface for harboring the virus and for ease of cleaning and sanitizing.
2. The Van Municipal Court may take any other reasonable action necessary to avoid the threat and spread of the COVID-19 virus.


I have attempted to confer with all Associate Judges 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 Associate Judges conduct proceedings consistent with the Operating Plan.

Date: 5/29/2020



Wade McMillan
Presiding Judge of Municipal Court

Date: 5/29/2020



Don Smith, Mayor

Date: _____

Dr. J.W. Dailey
Van Zandt County Local Health Authority