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## **COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Victoria Municipal Court**

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 Victoria 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 June 8, 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: self-monitor for symptoms, COVID screening questions, and temperature checks.
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: bullet resistant windows for window clerks, face masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and hand soap available for court staff. In the lobby, there are maximum occupancy signs posted in the lobby, stanchions in the lobby area, social distancing stickers are directional signs, and hand sanitizer available for customers.

### **Scheduling**

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Each hearing shall consist of no more than (10) defendants. The hearings will be staggered to limit number of defendants in the court room. Defendants will not be allowed to bring other

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guests with them to a hearing. Juvenile defendants shall only be accompanied by no more than two parent(s) or guardian(s) and no other guests including siblings. Accommodations will be made to comply with the Open Courts provision but at no time will the Courtroom exceed 25% normal Courtroom Capacity. All Jury and Bench trials will be rescheduled until further notice. The court will continue usage of Zoom to limit the number of required in-person hearings. Alternative options for resolving cases will be made available to citizens including, but not limited to, online, mail, drop box, and e-mail.

### **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 being given alternative solutions to resolving cases including, but not limited to, appointment-based scheduling, teleconference, online payment options, mail, and usage of drop box.

### **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 four individuals not from the same household will be permitted in the courtroom lobby.
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 the 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. Seating is limited to every other row.

### ***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.

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### Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building, outside of 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—of the court building.

### Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, court staff or emergency personnel 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, emergency personnel 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. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including face masks, gloves, sanitizer, and sanitizing wipes/spray.

### Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building to attend a court session 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.

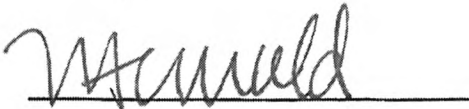
### Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every 2 hours and on an as needed basis.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtroom 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.

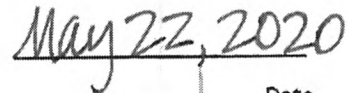
Other

The court will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and adjust as needed with continued collaboration with the mayor and the local health authority.

I have attempted to confer with all Municipal Court personnel 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 all proceedings that occur in the court building covered by this Operating Plan are conducted consistent with the plan.



Presiding Judge Heinold  
City of Victoria Municipal Court

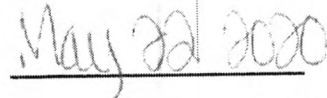


Date

Reviewed and approved by:

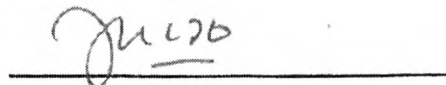


Rawley McCoy, Mayor, City of Victoria



Date

Reviewed and approved by:



Dr. John McNeil, County Health Authority



Date