

# COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Yoakum Municipal Court, DeWitt County, Texas

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 Yoakum Municipal Court** will implement the following protective measures:

## Current Modification of Operation:

1. Court will be held on June 4<sup>th</sup> with social distancing in place.
  - No more, than 4 cases scheduled per hour, and no more than 2 people per case
  - Pre-screen requirements prior to entering the building
  - Requiring a face mask to enter the building, including court staff
  - We have marked our Lobby for only 2 chairs together and at 6 feet apart
  - Will sanitize and disinfect between each case coming in the court room
  - If anyone arrives early for their scheduled Court Appearance, they will be asked to wait to enter the building, until someone exits the building.
  - No Jury Trials until further notice
2. The Court phone lines are open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
3. The Court accepts payments by mail, night drop box, money orders and checks. Credit Card payments are taken in person through the Drive Through window and via phone.
4. Requests for extension regarding cases that have judge's order must be submitted in writing by postal mail or email for the Judge to consider a change.

## 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. The judge 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 to adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. Judge will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than **June 4, 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: **Prescreen, check temperatures, requiring a mask, sanitize and disinfect between cases, coming into the courtroom, and maintain 6 feet apart in and out of the courtroom.**
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 99.4°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: **Prescreen, check temperatures, requiring a mask, sanitize and disinfect between cases, coming into the courtroom, and maintain 6 feet apart in and out of the courtroom.**

### Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:  
**Conducting court with no more than 4 cases per hour and allowing one case at a time in the courtroom, while others wait in the lobby. Disinfecting and sanitizing between cases.**

### 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.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated **by contacting the court by phone, advising of the health conditions, checking each defendant's situation and rescheduling docket for later date.**

### 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 two individuals not from the same house hold will be permitted in the building.
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.
6. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited.

### *Well*

7. In each courtroom, the counsel tables, judge's bench, and 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 at the entrances to the building, outside of each 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 individuals attempt to enter the court building, **Court Security Officer** 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, **Court Security Office** will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 99.4°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 99.4°F will not be transported to the court building.
4. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including **personal protective equipment, including mask, gloves and hand sanitizer.**

## 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.
3. Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for over 1 hour will be required to wear them while in the court building.

## Cleaning

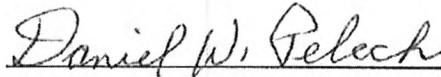
1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every hour.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms between every hearing, between morning and afternoon proceedings, and at the end of each day the courtroom 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.

After conferring with the City Mayor, Judge, local health Authority and several court clerks, The Covid-19 Operating Plan was approved up to safety standards to hold court. We will ensure that the persons signing below ensures that the court will operate by this plan.

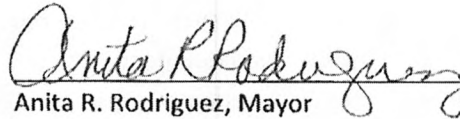
Telephone: 361 293-6321  
Office Hours: Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
Email address: [court@cityofyoakum.org](mailto:court@cityofyoakum.org)  
Website: [www.cityofyoakum.org](http://www.cityofyoakum.org)  
Address: 738 Hwy 77-A South  
P.O. Box 738  
Yoakum, Texas 77995

THIS OPERATING PLAN IS APPROVED BY:

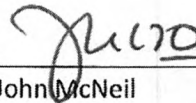
Date: 5/19/2020



Daniel W. Pelech, Municipal Court Judge  
City of Yoakum  
DeWitt County, Texas



Anita R. Rodriguez, Mayor  
City of Yoakum  
DeWitt County, Texas



JOHN L. McNEIL, D.O.

Dr. John McNeil  
DeWitt County Health Authority

---

Sid Harle, Regional Judge  
4<sup>th</sup> Administrative Judicial Regional Judge