

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Willis 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 **City of Willis Municipal Court** will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. The 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 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 and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. The judge will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than January 1, 2021

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: self-monitor for symptoms, COVID screening questions, and temperature checks.
2. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.0°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.
3. Judges and court staff will be provided face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
4. Judges and court staff are encouraged to clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in their courtroom and offices.
5. Judges and court staff will be required to wear a face covering while inside the court building or location where jury selection or jury trial will take place (except when alone in a private office).

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: No in-person hearings or trials will be scheduled until after July 1, 2020. After July 1st individuals will be allowed to schedule in-person appearances with the Judge, to include bench trials. Until the threat of virus spread has decreased appearance dockets will be

conducted utilizing the utility billing drive thru window to minimize contact (defendants will remain in their vehicle and be able to see and speak to the judge/prosecutor through a customer service window). Once dockets are resumed in the building social distancing will be practiced. Defendants will not be allowed to bring other guests with them to a hearing. Juvenile defendants shall only be accompanied by one parent/guardian 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% of its normal courtroom capacity. Jury trial scheduling will be dependent on orders and guidance issued by the Supreme Court of Texas, Court of Criminal Appeals, and the Office of Court Administration

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 docket 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.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by phone, fax, email, and mail or rescheduled until such time that they can safely appear in person.

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.
6. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, 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 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 individuals attempt to enter the court building, court staff 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, staff will use an infrared 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.

Face Coverings

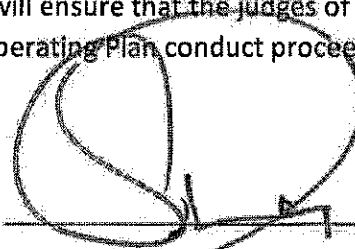
1. Individuals will be required to wear face coverings while in the court building. If the individual does not have a face covering and would like to use one, a disposable face mask will be provided as supply is available.

Cleaning

2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every day.
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.

I have attempted to confer with all judges of courts with courtrooms 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 the judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 1/19/2021



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court
Gary Scott