

## **COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Missouri City Municipal Court 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 courts of **City of Missouri City** 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 2, 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: Court personnel will continue to be temperature checked by the police department upon arrival to the building. All persons entering the court building to handle court business will be temperature checked. There is one entrance to the court lobby which allows for monitored and controlled entry.
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: Court personnel will be provided with a face covering if they do not already have one. Disposable gloves are available to personnel. Hand sanitizer is also available at each window station, inside the courtroom, at the metal detector screening station, and on the outside of the clerk windows for customers. After each setting the courtroom will be re-sanitized with Lysol and Clorox wipes where applicable. The front counter and entrance door handles will also be sanitized. City facilities has contacted with a company that sprays disinfectant every 30 days that remains effective for 30 days. This practice will continue.

### **Scheduling**

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Defendants will be given a specific time to appear for court. Times will be staggered to allow a set number of people per hour to appear in compliance with social distancing guidelines (approx. 10-15 people per hour). This will allow sufficient time to process out the defendants from one time slot before the next time slot defendants appear. In the notice to defendants regarding their court setting, we will include the recommendation that only the defendant appear unless he/she needs physical assistance or is a juvenile appearing with a parent/guardian. This too will help control the number of people in the court at any given time.

During times when court sessions are being held virtually, any defendants that notify the court that they do not have the means to appear remotely will be accommodated, when reasonably safe to do so, with an in person session.

### **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 eligible for a continuance to a later date or by appointment only.

### **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 household will be permitted in an elevator. If more than one individual from the same household is in an elevator, no other individuals will be permitted in the elevator.
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 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.

#### **Hygiene**

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrance to the building, at each clerk window, outside the courtroom, inside the courtroom, and outside of bathrooms. Hand sanitizer made available is at a minimum of 60% alcohol base.
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, there will be a city employee there to temperature check the person and he/she 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, they will be directed to use the infrared temperature scanner 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. 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 99.6°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 mask and gloves.
5. A walk through cleanse portal has been installed for defendants entering the building. The cleanse portal uses UV light to sanitize the individual.
6. A list of COVID-19 symptoms is posted near the screening stations, at the clerk windows, and outside the courtroom door.

#### **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, 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.
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.
5. We contract with an outside vendor to provide monthly sanitization using Razor Antimicrobial Coatings that last up to 30 days which is effective against SARS CoV-2.

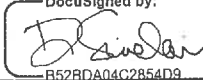
### Other

Floor markings are in place for the lobby line for the clerk windows that align with social distancing guidelines. Prosecution will use a protective shield/guard on his table in the courtroom. This will allow for protective measures beneficial to both parties and while allowing a private setting for negotiations. Shields/guards will be in place on the judge's bench and the courtroom clerk's desk as well for protective measures beneficial to all parties involved in the communication. Seating in the gallery will be marked and defendants directed to sit where marked to comply with social distancing guidelines.

In the event the court is notified of a possible exposure in the courtroom we will conduct an after action review with our EOC team to determine an after action plan.

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: 2/4/2021

DocuSigned by:  


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Presiding Judge of Municipal Court