

# COVID-19 Operating Plan for JP 1-2 Fort Bend County

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 Fort Bend 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 staff will be strongly encouraged to follow guidelines and practices to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and should be followed to ensure public/employee safety.
3. Our office will continue to maintain regular communication with the local health authority and County Judge and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the county.
4. Judges will begin conducting hearings for non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 1, 2020

## Screening

Fort Bend County Office of Emergency Management has designated a single central access to County Facilities and has provided staffing to screen and document all persons entering the building.

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, provided staff will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equal or exceed 100.0° F will be refused admittance to the court building.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, provided staff will also 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.
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.

## Face Coverings

1. Individuals will be encouraged to bring face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering on, one will be given to him/her at the entrance after being screened.
2. Judge and court staff will be encouraged to wear face coverings as necessary.

## Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judges and court staff are also required to take temperature as soon as entering the building. If temperature is equal to or greater than 100.0°F, or symptoms of COVID-19 will be required to go home.
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 or court staff have been advised to stay home if they are not feeling well or have any of the symptoms listed above, in order to prevent any spread between employees or to the public.
4. Judges and court staff will be required to practice social distancing and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time including completely cleaning their desk area twice per day.

### **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 per family will be allowed in the lobby area per case.
3. In each courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, 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. Occupancy will be monitored by court staff and bailiff to allow a 25% minimum of.
4. Microphones in the courtroom have plastic covering and are not available for use.
5. Signs have been placed on the floor, both in the lobby area and in the court room, 6 feet apart from one another instructing individuals on where to stand.
6. Benches are marked to instruct individuals on where they can sit to be in compliance with social distancing guidelines.
7. Plexi glass screens have been placed all around the Judges bench to protect staff and the public.

### **Hygiene**

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the lobby area and in the courtroom. They have also been provided for the clerks at each window and at their desk areas.
2. Tissues have been placed in the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, on the judges' benches, and out in the lobby area.

### **Cleaning**

1. Staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every hour (Lobby counters, seating benches, and door handles).
2. 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. Staff has been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
4. Staff has been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment and are instructed to wash hands after cleaning buildings.

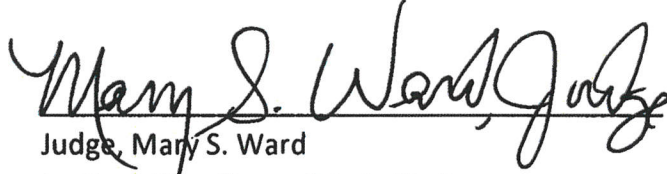
### **Scheduling**

1. Dockets have been reduced in size to limit the people in the lobby and court room area.

**Vulnerable Populations**

1. Our office strongly suggest vulnerable individuals to contact our office if they have any of the below underlying issues and need to make accommodations for their appearance in court. Individuals will then be directed to the Judge for instructions. Vulnerable individuals are considered those 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.

Date: 5/27/2020



Judge, Mary S. Ward  
Justice of the Peace Pct. 1- PL. 2  
Fort Bend County, Texas



---

Dr. Jacqueline Johnson- Minter  
Director and Local Health Authority



---

K.P. George  
Fort Bend County Judge

LOBBY AREA



PLEASE CHECK IN AT THE KIOSK AND HAVE A SEAT



PLEASE CHECK IN AT THE KIOSK AND HAVE A SEAT



PLEASE CHECK IN AT THE KIOSK AND HAVE A SEAT



PLEASE CHECK IN AT THE KIOSK AND HAVE A SEAT



**LOBBY AREA**

TWO PEOPLE  
OR  
ONE FAMILY PER  
BENCH MAXIMUM

TWO PEOPLE  
OR  
ONE FAMILY PER  
BENCH MAXIMUM

LOBBY AREA



DO NOT SIT HERE



COURTROOM

EXIT

EXIT



Stay Safe - Stay Healthy



COURTROOM

