

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Galveston County Justice Center

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

Galveston County 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 **local administrative district judge** will 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 setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than **June 1, 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: ***The judge, along with their staff will be screened each day upon entering the courthouse for temperature equal to or greater than 99.6 degrees (F), symptoms of the Corona Virus, will be offered hand sanitizer and maintain the required 6 feet social distancing. Practice appropriate hygiene as recommended at all times. Judges and staff will wear a mask if they feel it is necessary, recommended, but not required.***
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 should wear a mask if they feel it is necessary, which is recommended, but not required, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times.***
5. Protective Measures: ***The Jury Assembly Room was evaluated for its capacity utilizing social distancing, to include signage, the gallery in each courtroom has been evaluated for capacity, to include signage, along with the jury seating arrangements and to be monitored by court staff. In each courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, court clerk, court reporter and bailiff have been arranged so that social distancing applies. "Stop the Spread of Germs" flyers have been posted throughout the courthouse in English and***

Spanish. The District Clerk's Office will include information on each jury summons regarding the COVID-19 virus. That information will consist of bringing a protective mask if they have one, but not required. Reminder regarding social distancing, using hand sanitizer and washing hands, if sick notify the jury clerk, cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue if not wearing a mask.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:

Click or tap here to enter text. Each of the courts operating in the Justice Center; District, County, Probate and Justice of the Peace, will set and schedule their individual dockets. Each court will notify the District Clerk and County Clerk, as appropriate, of the need for the attendance of deputy clerks at scheduled proceedings. The schedules of each court will be provided to the Sheriff so that adequate screening and security may be arranged.

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, *offering an option to participate in court proceedings by tele-conferencing or video-conferencing if necessary and if possible.*

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 snackrooms, 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 entrances to the building, outside of elevators on each floor, 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, Galveston County Sheriff's Deputies 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, Galveston County Sheriff's Deputies 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. 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: **mask, gloves and hand sanitizer.***

Face Coverings

- 1. All individuals entering the court building will be not be required to wear face coverings. Recommended, but not required.*

2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them.

Cleaning

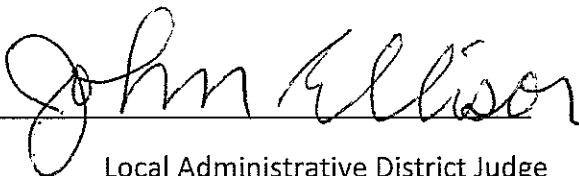
1. *Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned in the afternoon and evening.*
2. *Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms at the end of each day the courtroom is used and as requested between hearings.*
3. *Court building 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

In consultation with the Galveston County Health District and the Galveston County Judge, this Plan is subject to modification as necessary to comply with best practices to insure the health and safety of all individuals entering the Justice Center.

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 ***county judge***, 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: 5/28/2020



Local Administrative District Judge
Judge John Ellisor

Blue Text, Bold Italics: Item that will be addressed and which dept. will be responsible.

Black Text, Bold, Italics: What will be included in the plan up to this point. These were fill in the blanks.