



FILED FOR RECORD  
2020 MAY 21 PM 2:00  
DANA HOGG, DISTRICT CLERK  
HARDIN COUNTY, TEXAS  
By Deputy: *D. Hogg*

## COVID-19 OPERATING PLAN FOR THE HARDIN COUNTY 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 Hardin 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 county judge, and the county judge will maintain regular communication with the local health authority 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:
  - a. All judges and staff will be required to be screened daily with temperature checks and a medical/travel/exposure screening form upon entry into courtroom and/or court offices. A thermometer and screening form will be provided by the county for each department.
3. 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.

4. Judges and court staff will be required to practice social distancing of at least 6 feet and appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times. If a social distance of 6 feet or greater is not able to be maintained it is recommended that the persons involved will wear face coverings.
5. Protective Measures: Strict handwashing and sanitizing of all surfaces and materials used in the offices and courtroom will be maintained. The use of hand sanitizer/washing of hands should be done immediately upon entering the building.

### Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
  - a. Each court will stagger the times of all hearings in order to maintain social distancing requirements and avoid more than 10 persons gathered in the courtroom or in areas around the courtroom.
  - b. Court dockets will be reduced in size and scheduled appropriately to comply with social distancing and courtroom occupancy requirements.
  - c. All jail cases will be done remotely when possible to comply with social distancing and courtroom occupancy requirements.
  - d. All litigants seeking the court's services should schedule an appointment whenever possible.
  - e. There should be no family members or visitors accompanying any party scheduled for hearings, unless disabled.

### 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 for 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 given the option to participate remotely, upon a minimum 3-day notice to the court.

### 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, with the exception of the courthouse café.

### 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, if available, 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, the Security Checkpoint Officers will ask and/or require a screening form to determine if individuals 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, Security Checkpoint Officers 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.
3. Transport officers and 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 100°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 face coverings and disposable gloves, if available.

## Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to practice social distancing of at least 6 feet and appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times. If a social distance of 6 feet or greater is not able to be maintained it is recommended that the persons involved will wear face coverings.
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, if 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 2-3 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.

Other

Please watch the following video. It will help county employees and the public understand the daily screening and hygiene procedures: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5Z8oeSlrWg>

In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority, County Judge and District Judge. I will ensure that all District Judges, CPS and AG Judges, and other courts covered by this Operating Plan are given a copy of this Plan and are aware of conducting proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: May 21, 2020.



EARL B. STOVER III  
Administrative Judge  
88<sup>th</sup> Judicial District  
Hardin County, Texas

I have reviewed and approved this plan. Signed this the 21 day of May, 2020.



STEVE THOMAS  
District Judge  
356<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court  
Hardin County, Texas

I have reviewed and approved this plan. Signed this the 19 day of May, 2020.



WAYNE MCDANIEL  
County Judge  
Hardin County, Texas

I have reviewed and approved this plan. Signed this the 19 day of May, 2020.



JENNA WINBERG, MD  
Hardin County Health  
Authority

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# NOTICE

## **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS**

THE FOLLOWING VULNERABLE POPULATIONS WILL BE ACCOMMODATED REGARDING COURT HEARINGS PURSUANT TO THE OPERATING PLAN OF THE HARDIN COUNTY JUDICIARY:

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- INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE OVER AGE 65
- INDIVIDUALS WITH SERIOUS UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITIONS
- INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE IMMUNE SYSTEM COMPROMISED
- INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE PREGNANT

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS WILL BE MADE BY THE COURT FOR INDIVIDUALS IN THE VULNERABLE POPULATION CATEGORY. VULNERABLE POPULATIONS WHO ARE SCHEDULED FOR COURT WILL BE GIVEN THE OPTION TO PARTICIPATE REMOTELY UPON A MINIMUM 3-DAY NOTICE TO THE COURT.