

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Kleberg/Kenedy 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 105th District Court and County Court at Law 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 are prohibited from holding any in-person proceedings after June 1, 2020 without first submitting and having acknowledgement from the Regional Presiding Judge of an operating plan that is consistent with the Office of Court Administrations May 4th Guidance for All Court Proceedings During COVID-19 Pandemic.
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. All Courts are required until further notice to continue to use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.

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. 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.
3. Judges and court staff will be encouraged to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
 1. 105th District Court will limit hearings to every second and fourth week of the month only having docket on Tuesdays and Thursdays of those weeks.

The Capacity of the 105th District Court Room is 42. The capacity is posted outside Court room Door.

2. The County Court at Law will limit Criminal Hearings to Tuesday/Thursday and Civil to Monday/Wednesday/Friday.

The Capacity of the County Court at Law is 20. The capacity is posted outside Court room Door.

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 with face mask and hand sanitizer.

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 have been closed to the public.

Court Room 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.

Court Room 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, the Security Officer at the screening checkpoint 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. 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.
3. Staff whom are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including face mask, gloves, and hand sanitizer, and must change their clothes daily.
4. All persons entering the Court house will be required to social distance and remain six feet apart while being screened and while in the screening process.
5. If a person is not permitted to enter building because of symptoms, the person screening will notify the proper Court of the name of that individual immediately or as soon as reasonably possible to ensure that the case will be reset and no failure to appear capias issued.

Face Coverings

1. Individuals will be encouraged to wear face coverings or mask over the nose and mouth, but if the individual does not have a face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided.
2. Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for over 4 hours will be provided masks and required to wear them while in the court building if the supply is available.
3. Face coverings and masks will not be required for children under the age of two years, anyone who has trouble breathing, or those unable to remove.

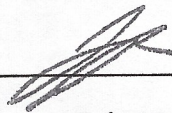
Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every 2 to 4 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 has 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. Maintenance cleaning staff will designate a "Safety Officer" to do rounds and identify bottle neck areas where people are gathering to make sure they spread out to healthy distances.

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: 6/1/2020



Jack W Pulcher

Local Administrative District Judge