

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Lamb 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 Lamb 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: All judges and staff members will self-monitor according to # 3 below.
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 any time they interact with the public in the performance of their official duties.
5. Protective Measure: Judges and court staff are encouraged practice social distancing. Staff should wear face coverings when social distancing cannot be maintained or when the use of face coverings might be deemed advisable. Additionally, court personnel should practice appropriate hygiene recommendations and follow local health authority recommendations at all times.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Each case will be scheduled based on the predicted time required for that case. The court will schedule cases to minimize the overlap of cases.

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 remote hearings where 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. Counsel will be responsible for maintaining appropriate safety measures and space between themselves, their co-counsel, their staff, their client, and their witnesses.

Hygiene

1. Sanitation stations have been placed in central locations on each floor of the courthouse and each justice court.

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, they will be asked to read and by their entrance certify that they are not suffering and of the symptoms of COVID-19 nor have they been in contact with anyone diagnosed with COVID-19. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions will be refused admittance to the court building.
2. Individuals entering the court building are subject to a temperature scan. Anyone 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, when PPE is available.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building should wear face coverings at all times.
2. All individuals entering a court must wear face coverings at all times and may remove them only at the direction of the court.
3. 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.

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned daily.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean commonly touched surfaces of the courtrooms between every hearing, between morning and afternoon proceedings, and at the end of each day the courtroom is used whenever possible.
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

Prior to allowing an in person hearing, the parties will be required to certify that a zoom hearing is not possible or practicable and they will comply with the "COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Lamb County Judiciary" together with any additional requirements the court might see fit to require.

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. The judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building and the remote justice courts covered by this Operating Plan shall conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/28/2020



Local Administrative District Judge

Notice to be posted at each public entrance:

ATTENTION

READ BEFORE ENTERING

Any person feeling feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100°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.

BY ENTERING THIS BUILDING YOU ARE CERTIFYING THAT YOU ARE NOT SUFFERING ANY OF THE ABOVE LISTED SYMPTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19 AND THAT YOU HAVE NOT BEEN IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH ANYONE DISPLAYING THESE SYMPTOMS OR CONFIRMED TO HAVE COVID-19.

If you have any questions or concerns about entering the building, please call (806) 385-4222

Vulnerable Persons AND Persons having contact with Vulnerable Persons

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.

YOU ARE CONSIDERED TO BE AT EXTREME RISK IF YOU CONTACT COVID-19. THEREFORE, YOU SHOULD USE PRECAUTIONS BEFORE ENTERING THIS BUILDING. Please call (806) 385-4222 before entering the building so that we can better protect your health.

PLEASE CONSIDER SAVING AN IN-PERSON VISIT

Many services are provided by Lamb County online @www.co.lamb.tx.us or by calling 385-4222

Please wear facemask, maintain social distancing, and use proper hygiene at all times

Facemask are required for all persons entering a courtroom

Facemask are available at any department

Notice to be sent with each order setting hearing:

NOTICE:

Vulnerable Persons AND Persons having contact with Vulnerable Persons

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. YOU ARE CONSIDERED TO BE AT EXTREME RISK IF YOU CONTACT COVID-19. THEREFORE, YOU SHOULD USE PRECAUTIONS BEFORE ATTENDING IN PERSON COURT PROCEEDINGS.

PLEASE CONTACT THE COURT OR HAVE YOUR ATTORNEY CONTACT THE COURT IMMEDIATELY SO THAT WE CAN MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO BETTER PROTECT YOUR HEALTH.

Fill appropriate court information.

example

154th District Court of Lamb County, Texas

100 6th Drive, Courthouse Room 211

Littlefield, TX 79339

(806) 385-4222 ext. 251

Cause No: _____

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In the _____
Court of
Lamb County, Texas

Certification that a “Zoom” hearing is not practical

I, _____ certify that a zoom hearing, or other group meeting alternative, is either not possible or practicable in the above referenced case and that I will comply with the “COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Lamb County Judiciary” together with any additional requirements the court might see fit to require.

I request that an in person hearing or that a hybrid hearing which allows one or more persons to appear in person. I understand that the Court will initiate a conference call among the parties to determine the most appropriate means to conduct the hearing.

Signed: _____
