

*San Angelo,
Texas*

Municipal Court



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December 22, 2020

Dear Judge Rucker,

Thank you for returning my phone call this morning, I want to assure you we are doing everything possible to comply with the guidelines provided by the CDC and OCA.

Our plan has been updated to enforce hearings strictly by virtual settings. The City of San Angelo Municipal Court will hold all hearings through the Zoom platform or teleconferencing as needed. The court will make every effort to limit the number of in-person hearings. The exception to conducting a virtual hearing will be to those who have a disability or lack of technology, in which the court will make every effort to provide and utilize the court's kiosk. Such hearings will include, but not limited to pretrial, bench trials, juvenile hearings, capias show cause hearings, and preliminary hearings. The court will also enforce the use of mail, fax, drop-box, on-line, and the drive thru window to resolve all eligible cases. In the event an in-person hearing is absolutely necessary, the court will limit the number of individuals in the building to ten(10) persons, with one person at a time in the courtroom. Only persons who have court dealings will be allowed in the building/courtroom. Juveniles will be accompanied by no more than two parent(s) or guardian(s). All in-person Jury trials have been cancelled and will resume when allowed by law for municipal courts to schedule in-person jury trials.

When in person hearings are necessary, all protocols regarding distance, face coverings, and sanitation will strictly be adhered to.

Dr. Vretis is our Local Health Authority. Dr. Vretis has worked tirelessly to answer any and all questions in effort to help the court meet local and state protocols. Dr. Vretis has reviewed our updated Operating Plan and has approved the plan, the statement from him is included.

Hopefully we are nearing the end of restrictions but until then, we will do whatever is deemed necessary to ensure the health and safety of our court personnel and our citizens.

COVID-19 Recertification Operating Plan for the City of San Angelo Municipal Court

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 **San Angelo, Municipal Court** 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 Court Administrator and presiding judge of the municipal court will maintain regular communication with the Local Health Authority, City Manager, and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
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: Self-monitoring and reporting any medical concerns that are consistent with the symptoms related to COVID-19, temperature monitoring as tools become available.
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 at all time.
5. Protective Measures: Face coverings for all employees and gloves for anyone in physical contact, i.e. exchanging paper forms, payments.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the building:
The San Angelo Municipal Court will hold and enforce all hearings remotely through the Zoom platform or teleconferencing in order to limit the number of in-person hearings. The only exception to having an in-person hearing will be to individuals who are unable to participate

in a virtual setting due to a disability or lack of technology, in which the court will make every effort to provide and utilize a kiosk to conduct the hearing remotely. Such hearings will include, but not limited to pretrial, bench trials, juvenile hearings, capias show cause hearings, arraignments, and preliminary hearings. In the event that an in-person hearing is absolutely necessary, only the person on the court docket will be allowed in the courtroom and will be seen individually. Juveniles will only be allowed to be accompanied by two parent(s) or guardian(s). Currently there is a limit of ten(10) persons, with the passing of a screening questionnaire, in the building at all times. This includes the capacity of the lobby and courtroom combined. The court will also continue to enforce the use of mail, fax, on-line, phone, and drive thru window to resolve all eligible 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.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by giving alternative solutions such as utilizing the drive through window, utilizing mail, and teleconferencing when appropriate or requested.

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. 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.
3. Public common areas, including breakrooms and snack rooms, have been closed to the public.

Gallery

4. 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.
5. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

Well

6. 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 will be placed at the entrance of the court, and at the front counter, at the desk of all clerks, and at the Judges' bench, and witness stands.
2. Tissues will be placed at the entrance of the court, and available at the front counter, at the desk of all clerk, and at the Judges' bench, and witness stands.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations in the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, Marshals/Bailiffs 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, Marshals/Bailiffs 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. 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 masks and gloves.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times.
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, or will be directed to utilize the drive through window to conduct business.

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every two 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

We have also installed new plex-glass at the front counters, that will limit exposure even more so to the clerks and the public.

In developing the plan, we consulted with the local Health Authority , documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the Judges of the San Angelo Municipal Court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan

L. P. David



Date: 12/22/2020

Presiding Judge of Municipal Court

Ignacia Guadarrama

Court Administrator

The plan submitted by the San Angelo Municipal Court has been reviewed and approved to mitigate the COVID-19 Virus. I also verify the plan meets the standards and guidelines set by the Office of Court Administration.

City of San Angelo, Local Health Authority Date