



City of Tyler Municipal Court

## **CITY OF TYLER MUNICIPAL COURT COVID-19 OPERATING PLAN**

*The approved COVID-19 Operating Plan of The City of Tyler Municipal Court (“Court”) went into effect May 4, 2020 and was updated May 28, 2020. Revisions will be implemented in response to the December 17, 2020 announcements of the Office of Court Administration (“OCA”).*

### **Current COVID-19 Court Procedures**

- The Court was closed to the public from March 13, 2020 through May 3, 2020. The Court lobby was reopened May 4, 2020 to provide services at cashier windows only. Staff members are separated from the public by glass.
- The Court modified the hours for public walk-ins to Monday through Friday, 7 am-4 pm to allow time for staff to clean and disinfect public areas and staff areas from 4-5 pm in preparation for the following business day.
- The Court resumed weekly dockets June 1, 2020 and reduced the number of defendants assigned to each docket to allow social distancing. Courtroom and hallway seating is marked by 6 feet intervals. Assigned seats are plastic and disinfected between dockets.
- The Court began conducting optional virtual proceedings in open court in August.
- In the event hearings are required, they are generally held virtually.
- Bench trials and jury trials have not yet resumed. Bench trials are tentatively scheduled to begin in February and jury trials are tentatively scheduled to begin in April.
- Daily jail dockets continue virtually. Warrant confirmation for Court cases is temporarily suspended.
- Customer service continues to be available by phone, email and fax.
- The public areas and staff areas are disinfected daily. Cashier counters are cleaned several times an hour. Masks, gloves, and sanitizer are provided to the entire staff.
- The lobby and outside entrance are marked for 6 feet distancing. Security officers allow a maximum of 10 patrons into the lobby at a time and the temperature of each person entering the courtroom is checked. Masks are required. Patrons are encouraged to utilize sanitizer provided at the entrance and at each cashier window.



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- Notices in English and Spanish are posted on the courthouse doors and on the Court website notifying defendants of the Court's modified services and safety precautions.
- The following language is posted on the courthouse doors. If these conditions apply to the participant, the clerk requests the license plate number and confirms the participant's appearance by using the Court security camera. This information is provided to the judge for rescheduling and the participant is excused from court.

*"In accordance with the Supreme Court Order, every participant in a proceeding must alert the court if the participant has, or knows of another participant who has: (i) COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms, or a fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea; or (ii) been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19. If you exhibit any of the above symptoms, you must return to your vehicle immediately and call the court staff at (903) 531-1266."*

To date, the Court has not received any reports of COVID-19 exposure or illness as a result of appearing in the Court.

### **Revised COVID-19 Court Procedures**

- The Court currently has in-person dockets scheduled for January, February and March of 2021. Those defendants will be contacted by mail and instructed to contact the Court to reschedule their appointment for a remote appearance.
- Previously scheduled trials will be continued pending discussions and preparations with all interested parties for remote proceedings, including ancillary hearings and appearances.
- The Court will coordinate with the Department of Public Safety, the conversion of its monthly Smith County hearings to remote proceedings.



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## Notifications

- All defendants will be scheduled for remote court appearances. In the event a defendant is unable to appear for court remotely, for reasons beyond the Court's control, including but not limited to a disability, lack of technology or internet access, the judge will consider all reasonable alternatives prior to an in-person appearance. Accommodations may include phone conferences on the record in open court, flexible dates and times or written correspondence. In the event an in-person appearance cannot be avoided, the same will be scheduled and previously noted precautions will be enforced.
- Notices in English and Spanish will be updated and reposted on the courthouse doors and on the Court website notifying defendants of the Court's modified services and safety precautions.
- The City of Tyler Communications department will publish an updated press release accordingly.

The City of Tyler Municipal Court Revised Operating Plan for all in-person proceedings on or after January 1, 2021 is hereby submitted for approval and recertification.

SIGNED this 28<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2020.



Amy McCullough, Presiding Judge  
City of Tyler Municipal Court