

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Aransas Pass Municipal Court San Patricio County Judiciary

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judge and other individuals entering the building housing the court, the court of Aransas Pass Municipal Court will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. The presiding judge 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. The presiding judge will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely or conduct teleconferences.
3. The presiding judge of the municipal court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority, emergency operations coordinator and the mayor and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. The presiding judge will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 15, 2020

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. The presiding judge and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible.
2. The presiding judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: take temperature, required masks, provide hand sanitizer, sanitize areas that need it.
3. The presiding judge 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. The presiding judge and court staff will be required 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:
Back log cases shall be scheduled every hour starting at 9 a.m. -4 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, allowing the limit of 10 people in the courtroom.
Walk in Docket and show cause hearings are scheduled every Wednesday starting at 1:30 p.m., allowing 10 people in the courtroom. (There will be rooms available for the people to

wait at until they are called into the courtroom, to keep the 10 person limit. We are working out of the Civic Center which is 30,000 sq ft.)

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. Presiding 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 providing a separate court date from the general population's court date or they will also have the option to have a teleconference or video conference.

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.

Gallery

3. 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.
4. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

Well

5. 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 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 of the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, court staff 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, court staff 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 will be seen in the holding facility or by video. (at the time of their arrest, their temperature have already been taken
4. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including gloves and masks .

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.
3. Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for over 1 hour will be provided surgical masks and required to wear them while in the court building if the supply is 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 1-2 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

When the defendants come in to take care of their citation(s) there is a clear barrier between the clerks and them. The clerks will wear gloves while handling money. There will be markings for the 6 ft distancing, allowing 7 people in the lobby area. Hand sanitizer will be available and areas used will be sanitized.

We will continue in encouraging the defendants to take care of their business with the court by telephone, emails, fax, video and teleconferences.