

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Municipal Court of Record for the City of Baytown, Texas

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the buildings housing the Baytown Municipal Court of Record 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 presiding judge of the municipal court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and mayor 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. The Presiding Judge, Court Administrator, and Senior Marshal will hold weekly meetings.
3. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements will be consistent with guidelines laid out by the Human Resources Department for the City of Baytown (see attached) , and will include , but not be limited to the following:
 - (1) there will be a person (with mask and latex gloves) who will use an infrared touch less thermometer to check the temperature of all persons coming into court building and courtroom (including judge and staff) and if anyone has 100.4 °F or more temperature they will be denied entrance and their case re-set or the employee will be sent home;
 - (2) all persons shall wear cloth or fabric face masks or bandanas (or a cloth) that covers their mouth and nose;
 - (3) there will be adequate spacing, including social distancing of a minimum of 6 feet that will be enforced in the court lobby and courtroom; and
 - (4) common areas like the countertops and table tops and doorknobs will be sanitized with Clorox or some other disinfectant that kills viruses and bacteria.
4. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.4 °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.

5. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
6. Protective Measures: Masks, disinfectant wipes, gloves, and hand sanitizer will be provided to staff. Staff (other than the Marshal's office) will only interact with the public behind protective glass.)

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:

No more than five persons in the lobby at any given time

No family members or non-defendants allowed unless absolutely necessary

Court window will be open for reduced hours

No in person hearings prior to June 1, 2020

No jury trials until further notice

Limited in-person hearings in June – dockets will be handled remotely to the degree possible.

All persons scheduled for in person dockets in June will be sent a notice directing them to virtual hearing capabilities . If an in – person docket is scheduled there will never be more than ten persons in the courtroom at a time- court will require and provide safe distancing, masks, temperature checks of all participants and will routinely disinfect the areas used before and after dockets.

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 virtual hearings to the degree possible, and in the event a virtual hearing is not an option the person will be given a reset to a later date.

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 break rooms 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 have been placed at the entrances to the building, 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 bailiff or Marshal, 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, the bailiff or Marshal will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.4°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 100.4°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, gloves, hand sanitizer, and tissues.

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.

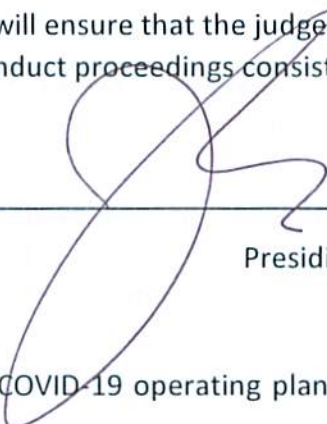
3. Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for over 1 hour will be provided surgical masks and required to wear them while in the court building if the supply is available.

Cleaning

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

I have attempted to confer with all associate judges of courts who work within the court building regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority and mayor as witnessed by their signatures below. I will ensure that the judges of the courtrooms in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/27/2020



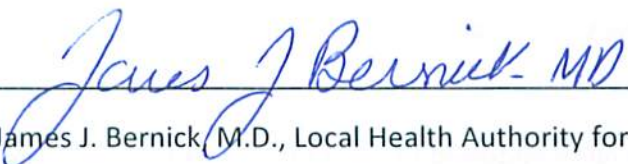
Presiding Judge of Municipal Court
JULIE K. ESCALANTE

I have received a copy and have reviewed the COVID-19 operating plan for the Baytown Municipal Court of Record, Baytown, Texas.



Mayor, Brandon Capetillo

I have received a copy and have reviewed the COVID-19 operating plan for the Baytown Municipal Court of Record, Baytown, Texas.



Dr. James J. Bernick, M.D., Local Health Authority for City of Baytown