

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Clear Lake Shores 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 Clear Lake Shores 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 six foot (6') social distancing, maximum group size, and other restrictions and precautions.
2. All judges will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely if the City has the computer equipment necessary to implement remote proceedings.
3. The presiding judge of the municipal court will maintain regular communication with and keep updated on 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 are currently not set up to perform the essential functions of their job remotely, but as the Court moves forward, it will consider how to telework when possible taking into account budget constraints. The Court has staggered work schedules when appropriate. Work Stations in the Court offices are spaced for six foot (6') social distancing requirements.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: The Presiding Judge and Court Administrator will use their efforts to meet regularly to address any of the court's needs to comply with these guidelines.
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.4 degrees 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 six foot (6') social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations and current city policies at all times.
5. Protective Measures: Masks and disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer will be provided to staff.

Scheduling

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

The Court will increase the number of dockets and stagger start times to decrease the number of people at the courthouse at the same time. Hearings that are in person will always be in accordance with established six foot (6') social distancing guidelines along with the requirement of masks or face coverings and supplying hand sanitizer. The court offices are already equipped with glass that separates defendants from court staff for any document signing and payments. The Court will use its efforts to purchase some plexiglass to provide separation as well in the Courtroom to separate defendants from the Judge and Court staff who will already be positioned considering six foot (6') social distancing requirements from each other. The Court will explore possibly implementing a system that will have defendants check in at the door yet then after giving their phone number to the clerk or bailiff, wait in their vehicle until called into the courtroom in smaller groups. The Court plans to have Defendants enter from one door and exit on the opposite side of the court next to where all documents are signed and payments are made (to keep people from having to walk across the courtroom to the other side to exit). The Court will use its best efforts to minimize traffic into the court by contacting defendants prior to court seeing if he or she is interested in an alternate method other than an in person appearance.

Vulnerable Populations

1. Individuals who are age 65 and older 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. The 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.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by remote means or possibly minimizing the persons in Court as much as possible. Signs have already been posted regarding this vulnerable population and letting the public know that alternate means are available instead of appearing in person. The vulnerable population notice will be added to the website.

Six foot (6') social distancing

1. All persons not from the same household who are permitted in the court building will be required to maintain adequate six foot (6') social distancing of at least 6 feet. If there is any concern, the court will have the ability to use a thermal thermometer to check anyone's temperature coming into the court in a safe manner.
2. Each restroom has been evaluated to determine the appropriate capacity to ensure six foot (6') 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 and will not be used by staff to share coffee, food or meetings.

Gallery

4. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff and/or bailiff(s).
5. The courtroom when open will have movable chairs positioned to keep six foot (6') social distancing in the seating. The number of chairs set up will comply with the 25% occupancy requirement until that guideline is increased and will be positioned no less than 6 feet in all directions. .

Well

6. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerks, and bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is six foot (6') social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.

Hygiene

1. 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. Hand Sanitizer will be available and Defendants will be required to use it and wear a mask at all times in the Courtroom or Court Offices.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, a court staff member or bailiff 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. The Court may hand out a questionnaire to be filled out prior to entering the building asking all of these questions.
2. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment.
3. If there is any concern, the court will have the ability to use a thermal thermometer to check anyone's temperature coming into the court in a safe manner.

Face Coverings

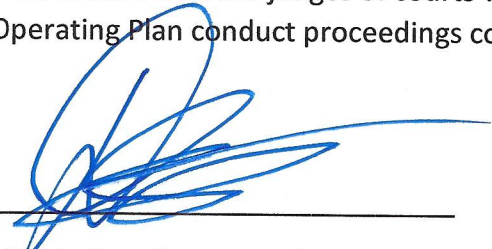
1. All individuals entering the court building will wear face coverings at all times and their time in the court building will be monitored.

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every day.
2. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

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 mayor, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/28/2020

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Presiding Judge of Municipal Court