

# **COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Municipal Court of Grapevine, Texas**

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the building housing the court, the Grapevine 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 non-essential proceedings remotely.
3. The presiding judge of the municipal court will maintain regular communication with and keep updated on the local health authority and mayor to adjust this operating plan as necessary to comply with conditions in the city.
4. Subject to extension of existing Emergency Orders or additional guidance from the Office of Court Administration, Judge(s) will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 2, 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. Judges and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: The presiding judge, and court clerk shall meet bi-weekly, or as often as necessary, to address concerns and reassess this COVID-19 operating plan.
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.3°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, pink eye, 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. Vulnerable populations will be identified and offered accommodation based on the nature of their court proceeding, with accommodation by remote means being the primary accommodation.
4. Judges and court staff may but are not required to wear face coverings in non-public areas, shall wear face coverings in public areas including the courtroom, shall always practice social distancing, and shall follow appropriate hygiene recommendations and current city policies at all times.
5. Protective Measures: Masks or face coverings 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:

All dockets and hearings will be available remotely and any hearings that are in person, and accompanying breaks, will always be in accordance with established social distancing along with appropriate distancing to provide separation as well in the front lobby, upstairs lobby, the prosecutor conference room, jury room, restrooms, and the courtroom. Guidelines from the Office of Court Administration, as mandated by the Texas Supreme Court and/or Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, as well as city policies shall be followed.

### **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.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by remote means.

### **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. If there is any concern, the court will have the ability to use a thermometer to check anyone's temperature coming into the court in a safe manner. All persons are encouraged to wear masks or face coverings.
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, such as hallways, stairways, and conference rooms, are closed to the public and will not be used except as necessary to access scheduled hearings and meetings.

### **Courtroom Gallery**

4. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
5. The gallery of the courtroom when open and the front lobby have been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

### **Courtroom Well**

6. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, clerk, 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. Tissues have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, and on the judges' benches, and in the hallways. Hand Sanitizer will be available in each area with frequent breaks and allowance to wash hands in restroom.

**Screening**

1. When individuals attempt to enter the courthouse portion of the building from the lobby, if they have not previously been screened at the clerk's window, a bailiff or 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/courtroom.
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 thermometer to check anyone's temperature coming into the court in a safe manner, and require anyone to wear a face covering or mask. Anyone with a temperature of equal to or greater than 100.3 will be refused admittance to the court building/courtroom.

**Face Coverings**

1. All individuals entering the public areas of the court building will wear face coverings at all times and their continued use and presence 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, including entry and exit handles, and countertops 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 conferred with the Emergency Management Coordinator 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. The court clerk will be responsible for implementing this plan throughout the building consistent with city directives. I will ensure that in-person proceedings in the courtroom covered by this Operating Plan are conducted consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/15/2020

  
Presiding Judge of Municipal Court

