

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Town of Highland Park Municipal Court, Dallas County

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the Town of Highland Park's Town Hall at 4700 Drexel Drive, Dallas, Texas 75205, the Town of Highland Park Municipal Court ("Municipal Court") will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. The Municipal Court's Presiding Judge and its Associate Judges (collectively, the "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. The Judges will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. The Presiding Judge will maintain regular communication with the appropriate representative of the Dallas County Health and Human Services Office (i.e., the local health authority) and adjust this operating plan as necessary so as to comply with any additional Dallas County conditions for non-essential, in-person proceedings.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential, in-person proceedings no sooner than **Tuesday, June 23, 2020**.

The Court Personnel's Health and Defendants Appearing in Court

1. The Judges and the Municipal Court Clerks (collectively, the "Court Staff") who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible.

The Judges, the Court Staff, the Bailiff and the Municipal Court Security Officers (collectively, the "Court Personnel") Monitoring Requirements: Court Personnel 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 Town Hall and should seek medical advice. To that end, BEFORE being allowed entry into Town Hall for their shift, the Court Personnel, just like ALL Town of Highland Park ("HP") employees, must have their temperature taken in the office area directly behind the Town Hall main desk. HP Public Safety Officer and Paramedic Mike Rockne shall review the temperature readings and then ask the foregoing questions when one has a temperature above 99.6 and/or demonstrates any of the systems listed. Officer Rockne shall reports his findings to the appropriate department head for that member of the Court Personnel, and said department head will send that member home if necessary.

2. Court Personnel will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
3. Protective Measures: (A) In both the written correspondence and in telephone conferences with the Defendants, the Court Staff will advise them that the Municipal Court will allow only one (1) family member/friend to accompany them inside Town Hall. If more than one (1) family member/friend appears on court day, the individuals not accompanying the defendants into Court will have to wait outside of Town Hall; (B) Defendants and family members/friends entering Town Hall will be allowed inside of the building and up to the second floor to participate in said defendants' non-essential, in-person hearing(s) in Municipal Court ONLY during the thirty (30) minute time slot assigned to their case(s); (C) Defendants and family members/friends arriving to Town Hall *before* their assigned time slot will have to wait outside of Town Hall until the correct time; (D) Defendants and family members/friends arriving to Town Hall *after* their assigned time slot will be denied admission into Town Hall, and they will have to re-schedule their non-essential, in-person hearing(s) accordingly.
4. The Municipal Court Security Officer working the check-in stand/temperature kiosk on the 1st floor of Town Hall shall conduct health checks of the defendants (and the one person that may be accompanying them into the courtroom, if any) ONLY, and it will be the group of questions/answers set out in sub-paragraph 1. of the section titled **Screening** on Page 4, along with taking their temperature if and when the temperature kiosk is up and running. The Municipal Court Security Officer working the check-in stand will also remind individuals who elect to wait just outside of Town Hall until their appointed time to observe the 6-foot "social distancing" standard.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in Town Hall and in the courtroom: (A) The Municipal Court will conduct non-essential, in-person hearings on Tuesday afternoons from 1:15pm – 4:15pm; and (B) Court Staff will set no more than five (5) defendants for non-essential, in-person hearings during the following 30 minute time slots: 12:45pm; 1:15pm; 1:45pm; 2:15pm; 2:45pm; 3:15pm; and 3:45pm.
2. The Municipal Court conducts anywhere from 4 – 6 bench trials a month. Bench trials will also occur on Tuesdays, and in instances where bench trials are set, there will be one (1) set to begin at 12:15pm, and another to begin at 12:45pm.

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. The Court Staff will contact individuals who are known to be in vulnerable populations and advise them of the Municipal Court's ability to accommodate them if necessary. Additionally, all defendants will be notified of the Municipal Court's policy to accommodate individuals that

have “serious underlying health conditions” set out in sub-section 1. above. Specifically, and upon request, each such vulnerable defendant (and members of their household) may make their in-person appearance when there are no *other* defendants (nor members of the *other* defendants’ household) at the check-in stand, in the courtroom, or at the Court Staff window. Likewise, such individuals may sit in the courtroom during their discussions with the judge or the prosecutor. Other than members of the public that are exercising their constitutional right to watch “open” court proceedings (if there are any), the accommodations above mean that individuals who are in the vulnerable population, and who insist on having a non-essential, in-person hearing, will literally have the entire Municipal Court to themselves.

Social Distancing

1. All persons not from the same household who are permitted in Town Hall will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet.
2. No more than two individuals not from the same household will be permitted in an elevator. If more than one individual from the same household is in an elevator, no other individuals will be permitted in the elevator. There will be signage on the elevators, in English and Spanish, advising all persons of same*. (*See Attachments)
3. 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. Moreover, certain sinks/stalls will be blocked off to ensure social distancing.
4. Public common areas, including water fountains, breakrooms and snackrooms, have been closed to the public.

Gallery

5. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of the Municipal Court is two (2), and this limitation will be duly-posted at the doorway of Town Hall. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by the Bailiff and/or the Municipal Court Security Officer(s).
6. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

Courtroom

7. In the Municipal Court, (A) the counsel and Town Prosecutor’s tables, (B) the witness stand, and (C) the judge’s bench have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space. There shall also be Plexiglas partitions at each of these locations. There is already thick, protective glass at the Court Clerk’s check-out windows.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to Town Hall/the check-in stand and next to the Court Staff’s window.

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" (or similar such literature) has been posted in multiple locations on the first floor of Town Hall.

Screening

1. When defendants and/or their family members/friends attempt to enter Town Hall, the Municipal Court Security Officer on duty at the check-in stand/temperature kiosk 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 into Town Hall. If the individual is the defendant, said-person will have to re-schedule their non-essential, in-person hearing(s) accordingly. Municipal Court Security Officer(s) who are screening individuals entering Town Hall will be provided personal protective equipment, including face coverings, gloves, and a partition necessary to maintain the required social distance and/or to shield them as appropriate.
2. In the Court Staff correspondence to the defendants *before* their assigned court date and time for their non-essential, in-person hearing(s), defendants will be advised that they and their family members/friends may **ONLY** bring inside of Town Hall (i) their smartphone/laptop, (ii) their wallet/checkbook, and (iii) their citation/paperwork related to their alleged offenses. At the check-in stand, the Municipal Court Safety Officer will again advise them (and members of the gallery, if any) of same.
3. Consistent with the "social distancing" standards above, at no time while either the Defendants or their family members/friends or gallery members are at Town Hall will Municipal Court Security Officer(s) "wand" them with a metal detector device. Likewise, the Municipal Court Security Officers will not "pat down" the individuals' clothing to check for weapons. These facts notwithstanding, the Municipal Court Security Officer at the doorway of the courtroom, plus the Bailiff inside in the courtroom means there are two (2) armed officers watching over no more than seven (7) individuals [maximum number of defendants with family members/friends in the courtroom equals (=) 5, plus (+) maximum number of individuals in the gallery equals (=) 2] in the courtroom at any given time.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering Town Hall will be required to wear face coverings at all times.
2. Prior to their non-essential, in-person hearing(s), Defendants and their family members/friends will be advised in writing that it is mandatory that they bring cloth face coverings with them when they come to Town Hall. If the individual who refuses to bring and wear a face covering is the defendant, said-person will have to re-schedule their non-essential, in-person hearing(s) accordingly.

Cleaning

1. Town Hall cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the Municipal Court so that common spaces are cleaned at least every five (5) hours on Tuesdays and/or when defendants attend Municipal Court.
2. Town Hall cleaning staff will clean the courtroom immediately prior to the Tuesday, 12:45 time slot the day the courtroom is used and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
3. Town Hall cleaning staff will have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
4. Town Hall cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

Other

After conducting several meetings and then upon further deliberations, the Court Personnel, the Town's Department of Public Safety, the Town Administrator and the Head of Municipal Court administration, developed this Operating Plan so as to insure the safety of the defendants that come to Town Hall on Tuesdays at their assigned time, family members/friends that may be with them, members of the gallery (if any), members of the general public at Town Hall on Tuesday afternoons for non-court-related business, the Court Personnel, and the other employees of the Town of Highland Park.

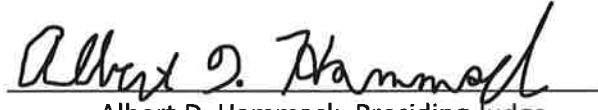
Under the Court Staff's scheduling of cases described above, there will not be more than ten (10) persons in the Municipal Court at any time. That is, the Court Personnel actually in the courtroom is three (3), (i) the Judge, (ii) the Prosecutor, and (iii) the Bailiff. As stated above, there will also be two (2) open spaces for any members of the gallery/viewing public (if any), plus five (5) defendants (which includes their family members/friends, if any). The Municipal Court Security Officer at the entryway of the courtroom will monitor the number of individuals actually inside the courtroom and will, if and when necessary, direct defendants and their family members/friends (if any) to stand and remain outside of the courtroom until such time that their admission into the courtroom will not cause there to be more than ten (10) individuals in the courtroom.

The defendants and their family members/friends (if any) who are actually inside the courtroom will remain standing until their conference with either the judge or the prosecutor. The courtroom will provide these individuals "markers" where they are to stand before said conference, with these markers observing the social distance 6-foot standard. Other than the Judge and the Prosecutor, everyone else in the courtroom will be standing, except for members of the gallery there to watch court, members of the vulnerable population who request to sit, and those individuals unable to stand for more than five (5) minutes without experiencing unnecessary pain or discomfort.

When checking-out from Municipal Court at the Court Clerk's window, markers will be in place for the defendants and their family members/friends (if any) to stand in order to comply with the social distance 6-foot standard.

In developing this Operating Plan, I consulted with the local health authority (i.e., a representative of the Dallas County Health and Human Services office, Dr. Joann Schulte), and the documentation memorializing our discussions regarding this Operating Plan is attached hereto. I have also reviewed this Operating Plan with the Mayor of the Town of Highland Park. I will ensure that the Court Personnel conduct proceedings consistent with this Operating Plan.

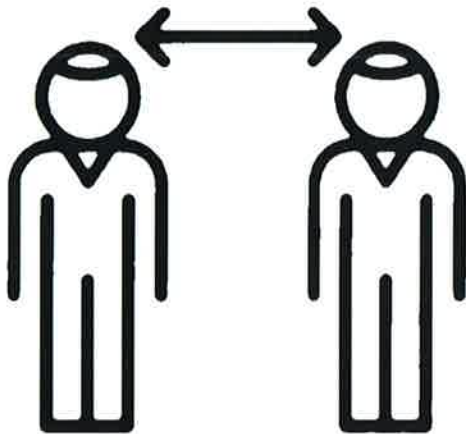
Date: 6/10/2020


Albert D. Hammack, Presiding Judge
Town of Highland Park Municipal Court

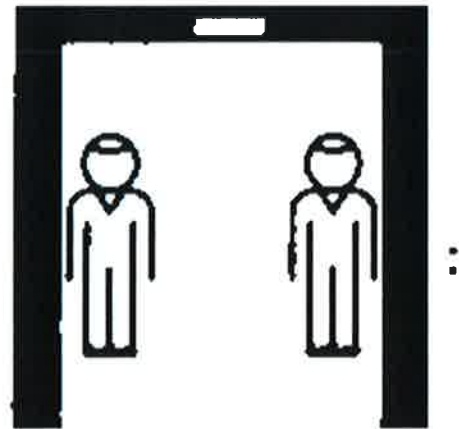
ATTENTION VISITORS

PHYSICAL DISTANCING ON ELEVATORS

6 ft apart



Maintain safe
distance on elevators

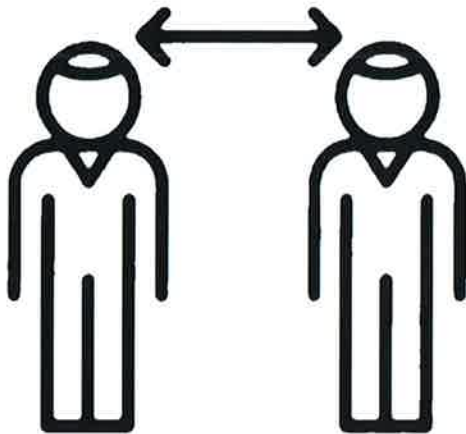


- NO MORE THAN (2) INDIVIDUALS PERMITTED ON ELEVATOR
- IF MORE THAN (2), ALL THE INDIVIDUALS ON THE ELEVATOR MUST BE MEMBERS OF THE SAME HOUSEHOLD

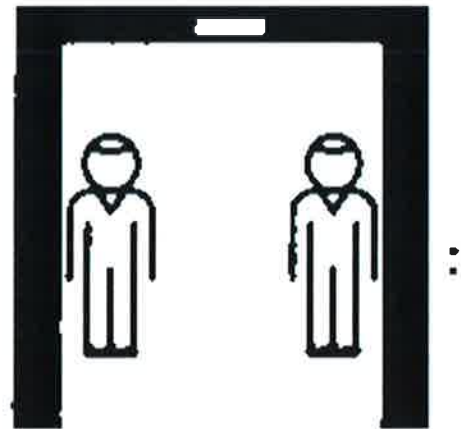
ATENCIÓN VISITANTES

DISTANCIAMIENTO FISICO EN EL ELEVADOR

6 pies de distancia



Mantener un distanciamiento seguro en los elevadores



- NO MAS DE (2) INDIVIDUOS PERMITIDOS EN EL ELEVADOR
- SI SON MAS DE (2), TODAS LAS PERSONAS EN ELEVADOR DEBEN SER MIEMBROS DEL MISMO HOGAR.