

Hurst Municipal Court COVID 19 Operating Plan After June 1, 2020

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 Hurst 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 proceedings remotely.
3. The Presiding Judge will monitor requirements of the local health authority and the Governor of Texas, consult with the city mayor and/or city manager and will adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in Tarrant County and the State of Texas.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner June 9, 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 and when allowed by the City of Hurst.
2. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured their own 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.
3. Judges, bailiffs, marshals and court staff will be requested and encouraged to wear face coverings when unable to maintain a 6 feet distance from court attendees, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations during all in-person court settings.

Protective Measures:

The Court will maintain sanitization stations at all customer service windows and courtroom security area and entrances.

The Court will sanitize courtrooms between each session.

The Court will maintain social distancing of 6 feet at all times unless otherwise required by security procedures. The Court will post signs in public areas reminding people of the best hygiene protocols.

Scheduling

1. Court dockets will be set in such a way as to limit the number of defendants and observers in the courtroom to 25% of the total courtroom capacity.

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 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 request a video appearance or if that is not possible, a continuance 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. Only one person is permitted in the restroom at a time.
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 marked and staggered to allow a distance of 6 feet between all persons seated in the courtroom.
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 each courtroom, outside of the clerks' areas and outside of bathrooms.
2. 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 along with other signage directing people to maintain a distance of 6 feet apart.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court, 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. Bailiffs or marshals who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including face masks, gloves and sanitizer.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court will be requested and encouraged to wear face coverings.
2. Individuals will be required to bring a blue or black pen to use in signing documents.

Cleaning

1. Staff will clean the courtrooms between each court session or docket.
2. Common areas in the court area will be cleaned twice daily.
3. 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 am the sole judge with courtrooms in the court building. In developing the plan, I reviewed information from the local health authority and the Texas Governor's office, as well as consulted with the mayor/city manager for the City of Hurst, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that this Operating Plan is followed and that we conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Signed this the 3 day of June, 2020.



Lacy D. Britten
Presiding Judge
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