

# Covid-19 Plan for the Municipal Court of Ingram, Texas

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Having consulted with the Mayor of Ingram, The Health Authorities, The Administrative Judge, the City's Attorneys, the Alternate Judge, The Court Clerk and Municipal Court Staff and further, recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the buildings house by the Court, the Ingram Municipal Court shall implement the following protective measures:

## GENERAL

1. 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 until further orders are made known.
3. The Presiding Judge of the Ingram Municipal Court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and Mayor and adjust this operating plan as necessary with health conditions in the city.
4. All judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 1, 2020.

## JUDGES and COURT STAFF

1. Judges and court staff will telework remotely when possible.
2. **Judges or court staff monitoring requirements:** Face mask coverings are mandatory, temperatures are taken upon arrival; hand sanitizer "stations" must be installed. In the alternative to face mask covering, if the staff or judge is behind an appropriate shield, face masking will not be required.
3. Judges and court staff who feel feverish, have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 99.6°F, with new or worsening signs or symptoms of COVID-19 (such as cough, shortness of breath, 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 courtroom and should seek immediate medical advice.
4. In addition to the above, Judges and court staff will be required to practice social distancing, and appropriate hygiene recommendations at all-times including but not limited to using gloves when handling documents not generated at the staff's workstation, handling money and limit walking around in the courtroom. If meals or snacks are taken at work stations, those areas and counters are to be sanitized before and after use.

## SCHEDULING

Schedules will be implemented with the goal of reducing occupancy in the court gallery. Occupancy of the Gallery is limited to 13. Hearings are scheduled every second and fourth Wednesday, as essentially required. Other hearings may be scheduled as required with the approval of the Presiding Judge. Remote hearings are encouraged strongly and jury trials settings will not be scheduled until further order issues.

## **VULNERABLE POPULATIONS**

1. Individuals over 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 by factors such as chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy, are considered vulnerable populations.
2. Each judge will include information within orders setting hearings, docket notices, and in other communications notifying individuals who are in vulnerable populations of the ability to contact the court to identify themselves as vulnerable individuals and therefore entitled to receive appropriate accommodations. A notice with this information will be posted on the courts websites and in conspicuous locations around the courtroom (a copy of which is attached).
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by automatically resetting their cases. This notice will be printed in English and Spanish on the court appearance notice.

## **SOCIAL DISTANCING**

1. All people not from the same household permitted in the court building will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet.
2. The only restroom in the building has been evaluated as a single facility. No waiting in line will be permitted in the area where the restroom is located.
3. Normally public common areas have been closed to the public.

## **GALLERY**

1. The maximum number of people permitted in the gallery of the courtroom has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
2. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating arrangement. The seating generally is limited to every other row and as stated, is indicated.

## **INSIDE THE BAR**

In the courtroom , the counsel tables, witness stand, judges bench, clerks chair, court reporter (if appropriate), and bailiff seating (if appropriate), have been arranged in such a way 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 and outside the restroom.
2. Tissues have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at council tables, at the witness stand, on the judge's bench and in the hallways.
3. The Texas Department of State Health Services "Stop the Spread of Germs" flyer has been posted in multiple locations of the court in the court building

## SCREENING

1. As individuals attempt to enter the court building, court personnel will ask if they are feeling feverish, have a cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, have been in close contact with any person who confirmed to have COVID-19. Individuals indicating "yes" to any of these questions will be refused admittance to the court building.
2. Security will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of any person attempting to enter the courtroom. Individuals whose temperature equal or exceed 100°F will be denied entry to the building.
3. Staff screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment including face mask and gloves.

## FACE COVERINGS

1. Individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face mask covering at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face mask covering with them but if the individual does not have a face mask covering, a disposable face mask will be provided.

## CLEANING

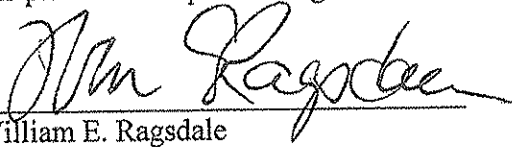
The courtroom will be sanitized between every hearing and at the end of each day the courtroom is used with product known to be effective against this virus by people trained to provide this service.

## OTHER

1. A Plexiglas barrier is installed at the service counter between customers and court staff.
2. Excess chairs or benches will be blocked or indicated in the courtroom and in the lobby as appropriate to ensure social distancing is observed.
3. There will be one door to enter in another door to exit the courtroom with appropriate signage to indicate each.

**CERTIFICATION**

As the Presiding Judge, I have contacted the Alternate Judge who would use this court room regarding this operating plan. In developing this plan I have also consulted with the local health authority and the Mayor of Ingram and documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure judges covered by this plan conduct proceedings consistent with the Plan.



William E. Ragsdale  
Presiding Judge  
Ingram Municipal Court

Signed and Dated this 29 day of May, 2020.: