

COVID-19 OPERATING PLAN FOR KILGORE MUNICIPAL COURT

Recognizing the need to ensure the public health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, Court staff, Judges and other individuals entering the building housing the Court, the Kilgore Municipal Court will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. All Judges of the Court will comply with the Emergency Orders issued by the Supreme Court of Texas and the 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 reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. The Presiding Judge will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and the City Manager 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 July 1, 2020.
5. The Presiding Judge will continue to conduct dockets and bench trials on contested cases and the Associate Judge will conduct dockets on undisputed matters as before.

Judges and Court Staff

1. The City of Kilgore administration has designated the Court staff as essential personnel for purposes of the COVID-19 response and by reason thereof the Court staff shall follow the procedures established by the City Manager regarding the operation of the Clerk's offices in providing services to the public.
2. The Court administrator shall be responsible to insure that:
 - A. Court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 99.6 degrees Fahrenheit, 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 Court building and should seek medical advice.

- B. All Court staff will be required to practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times. The use of facial coverings is highly recommended when in contact with the public.
- C. Court staff members use email and telephone calls when possible, rather than face-to-face meetings.
- D. Appropriate signage is posted recommending compliance with the CDC guidelines for wearing protective mask and hygiene.

Scheduling

1. The following Court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the Court building:
 - A. Bench trials shall be limited to Mondays and Wednesdays in number per docket.
 - B. Jury trials shall be limited to two per docket, to be held on Saturday.
 - C. The Court will continue to hold jail docket in the same manner for inmates who have been examined and cleared for COVID-19 by the jail staff.

Vulnerable Populations

1. Vulnerable populations consist of individuals who are 1) over the age of 65 and 2) 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. A notice of this information will be posted in conspicuous locations at the entry of the Court building. A copy of the notice is attached hereto.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for Court will be afforded priority scheduling by the Clerk of the Court and when possible, will be schedule when no other matters are scheduled.

Social Distancing

Lobby

1. Individuals waiting in the Lobby shall be required to practice social distancing of not less than six (6) feet apart unless they reside in the same household and shall be advised of such by the Bailiff. No more than four (4) people of different households shall be in the lobby at one time.
2. Defendants, witnesses and others shall be permitted to remain in their vehicles until such time as their hearing is to be conducted and will be notified by the Bailiff.
3. Public common areas, including breakrooms and snackrooms, have been closed to the public.

Gallery

4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of the Courtroom has been determined to be ten (10) individuals unless otherwise authorized by the Presiding Judge. This limitation shall be posted on the entrance to the Courtroom door. The maximum capacity of the Courtroom will be monitored and enforced by the Court Staff and Bailiff.
5. The gallery of the Courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other seat, except for members of the same household, with an empty row to be between each occupied row in the gallery.
6. The maximum number of peace officers in the Courtroom shall be limited to three, plus the Bailiff, except in emergency situations.

Well

7. In the Courtroom, counsel tables, witness stand, Judge's bench, and Clerk and Bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing or at least six (6) feet between each space.
8. All testimony may be presented from the defense table in order to reduce expose to additional surfaces during hearings.
9. All evidence will be presented to witnesses in a non-contact manner or providing the witness with clean gloves if they should desire or need to handle any evidence.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the Courtroom.
2. Tissues are to be placed near the door of the Courtroom, counsel tables and on the

Judge's bench.

3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been placed at the entrance to the Courtroom.

Screening

1. The Bailiff will ask each person entering the Court building to attend Court proceedings if they feel 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 during Court proceedings.
2. Jail inmates being transported to Court from the jail shall have been screened within four hours for symptoms of COVID-19 by the jail staff.
3. The Bailiff who is assigned to screen individuals entering the Court building will be provided with personal protective equipment.

Face Coverings

1. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings to Court with them.
2. Individuals who will be required to be in the Court building for over 1 hour will be required to wear face coverings at all times if the supply is available.

Cleaning

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

Attendance

1. In order to maintain a record of all individuals entering the Court building in the event of a known outbreak of COVID-19 by a person who has been in Court, the Bailiff will record the names and addresses of all Court attendees and the date of their attendance. Such records will be maintained until further notice.

I have conferred with all the Municipal Judges in Kilgore regarding this Operating Plan. In

developing the Plan I consulted with the City Manager, the local health authority and the Court Staff, documentation of which is attached to this Plan. I will insure that the Judges of the Municipal Court conduct Court proceedings consistent with the Plan.

August 3, 2020.



Glenn D. Phillips
Presiding Judge
Kilgore Municipal Court