

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Town of Lakeside Municipal Court

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the buildings housing the courts, the Town of Lakeside 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 (minimum 6 feet), maximum group size, and other restrictions and precautions.
2. All judges will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. The presiding judge of the municipal court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and mayor and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. The Town of Lakeside Municipal Court is conducting all proceedings remotely at this time and will continue to conduct all proceedings remotely until October 1, 2020 at the earliest. The Town of Lakeside Municipal Court will operate under this plan when it begins conducting non-essential in-person proceedings.

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. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: The Town of Lakeside Municipal Court is a small court with no more than one judge, one or two bailiffs and one or two clerks staffing the courthouse at any one time. The Judge and court staff will self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms and report any such symptoms to their immediate supervisor or the Judge by phone call or e-mail prior to coming into work.
3. Judges or court staff 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 the building and should seek medical advice.



4. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times.
5. Protective Measures: Court Clerks will remain behind a glass or plexiglass partition to separate themselves from the public to the extent possible. When Court Clerks cannot remain behind the glass or plexiglass partition, such as when they are assisting the Judge in the Courtroom, the Clerks shall practice social distancing. Hand sanitizers and cleaning supplies will be made available for the Judge, court staff and the public. The Judge, court staff and public will be encouraged to use hand sanitizer products regularly.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
To reduce the number of people appearing at a single docket, the Court will limit the docket size to no more than 30 defendants and all buildings will maintain 50% occupancy or less. In the case of an overflow, individuals will be asked to leave a phone number with the bailiff and to wait in their vehicle until called. Any defendant who is at risk or uncomfortable with appearing will be allowed to discuss their case with either the Judge or Prosecutor by ZOOM, or other method acceptable to the parties. Defendants requiring assistance or a guardian will be limited to one additional person.

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. A notice with this information will be posted on the courts' websites and in conspicuous locations around the court building (a copy of which is attached).
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by being offered an alternate court date to be conducted by Zoom or a specially set in-person hearing where they can be isolated from others or they will be given priority status on that day's docket if they prefer not to be rescheduled for another day.

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. 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, 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 and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
5. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

Well

6. 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 entrance to the building, outside of the courtroom, and outside of bathrooms.
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" has been posted in multiple locations on in the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, a bailiff posted at the entrance to the building 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. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, a bailiff posted at the entrance to the building will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 99.6°F will be refused admittance to the court building.
3. Inmates being transported from the jail to the court building will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and have their temperature taken prior to transport. Inmates with symptoms or a temperature equal to or above 99.6°F will not be transported to the court building.
4. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including gloves and a mask.

Face Coverings

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

3. Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for over 30 minutes will be provided surgical masks and required to wear them while in the court building if the supply is available.

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least twice a day when the building is occupied.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms between every hearing, between morning and afternoon proceedings, and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
3. Court building cleaning 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.

Other

Cases will be called in order of appearance in the courtroom on the court date so that we maintain a "first-in, first-out" system.

For documents to be signed in the courtroom, two jars of pens will be maintained. There will be a "unused jar" and a "used jar". As pens are used from the "unused jar" they will be moved to the "used jar" and not reused until they have been disinfected.

I have attempted to confer with all judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority, city administrator and mayor, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 9/3/2020



Pat Jacob, Mayor
Town of Lakeside, Texas



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court
Town of Lakeside, Texas

Vulnerable Populations

Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions can call the Town of Lakeside Municipal Court at 817-237-1234 to set up a Zoom meeting with the Court.