

# **COVID 19 Operating Plan for the City of Leonard Municipal Court, Fannin County, Texas**

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 Leonard Municipal Court, Fannin County, Texas 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 of the Municipal Court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and the City Management and adjust this operating plan as necessary with the conditions in the City of Leonard.
4. Judges will begin setting non essential in person proceedings no sooner than June 1, 2020.

## **Judge and Court Staff Health**

1. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: All staff will self monitor and will immediately report any symptoms or exposure to his or her supervisor.
2. Judges or court staff who 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, feeling feverish, 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 public building and should continue to monitor their temperature for another 24 to 48 hours, and should seek medical assistance.
3. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times.
4. Protective Measures: Clerks/Judges/Bailiffs will adhere to Social Distancing practices. No sharing of supplies or work stations. Hand Sanitizer, Disinfecting Spray and Wipes are readily available.
5. There will be a plastic shield guard installed to protect the Judge's bench.

## **Scheduling**

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Docket times have been extended by earlier start times, spacing defendants report times, and by attempting to identify all vulnerable populations via inquiry of age and health conditions when phone contact is attempted before their scheduled court date and time. Each defendant will be requested to have some type of face covering when reporting to court. Court staff will provide face coverings if they report without covering.

### **Vulnerable Populations**

1. Individuals who are over age 65 and individuals with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, chronic lung disease, diabetes, severe 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 court's website and in conspicuous locations around the court building.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court as identified in **Scheduling** above may be accommodated by resetting their proceedings to a date no less than 30 days in the future, or conducting their hearing via Zoom, if possible.

### **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. The maximum number of persons permitted in each room has been determined and posted. City Hall and building vestibules will be used for extra seating areas if needed to allow 6 feet of space between seating and comply with maximum room capacity limits.
3. The courtroom and lobby will be marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating.
4. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
5. In the 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 and the courtroom.
2. Tissues have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, on the judge's bench, and in the hallways.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted on each exterior door leading into the court building and at the entrance of the courtroom.

### **Screening**

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, court security staff 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 room and given an alternate court date in 30 days.

2. When individuals attempt to enter the court room, court security staff 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 room and given an alternate court date of at least 30 days in the future. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including masks and gloves.

#### **Face Coverings**

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear a face covering at all times.
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.

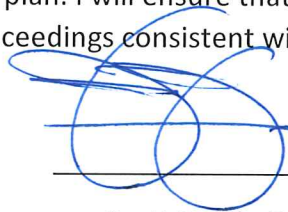
#### **Cleaning**

1. Cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the courtroom so that common spaces are cleaned 24 hours before each court session.
2. Cleaning staff will clean the courtroom and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
3. Cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
4. Cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

#### **Other**

In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority, City Management, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the Leonard Municipal Court covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 6/10/2020



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Scott Smith, Presiding Judge of Municipal Court