
COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Municipal Court of City of Progreso

The City of Progreso recognizes the need to ensure the health and safety of the litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the buildings housing the Courts. Therefore, the City of Progreso Municipal Court will implement the following protective measures to ensure the health and safety of all occupants:

I. 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 in accordance with the latest CDC and TDSHS guidelines.
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 City of Progreso Mayor and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings only pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Orders and the CDC requirements.

II. 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: Court Staff and the Judge will monitor all occupants of the Courtroom to ensure that all who enter have a face mask covering and will monitor the temperature of all occupants in accordance with the Emergency Order guidelines.
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, should seek medical advice, and will be directed to contact the Hidalgo County Health and Human Services Department (hereinafter HCHHSD) for isolation and testing recommendations as well as contact tracing.

4. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: To protect Staff and all occupants, Court Staff will be offering free face masks and gloves.

III. TESTING:

1. Individuals who have tested POSITIVE for COVID-19 and are within their infectious period will be required to provide a release letter from the HCHHSD.

IV. SCHEDULING:

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:

Wednesdays from 2:30 to 5p.m. and Fridays from 2:30 to 5p.m.

V. VULNERABLE POPULATION:

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 conspicuous locations around the court building.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by allowing them to appear remotely or if not possible due to unforeseen circumstances than by privately set up appointments allowing sufficient time.

VI. 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.

a. Gallery

1. 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.
2. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

b. Other Courtroom Seating and Spacing

1. 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.

VII. HYGIENE:

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building, outside of each 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 each floor of the court building.
4. Signs will be placed outside and inside the restrooms encouraging hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

VIII. SCREENING:

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, Court 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 building and will be instructed to call the HCHHSD or consult with their primary care provider for follow-up.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, Court Staff will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.0°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, masks, and protective face shields.

IX. FACE COVERINGS:

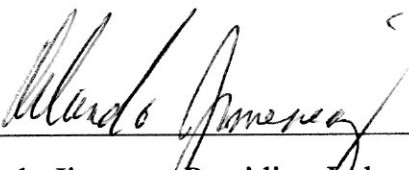
1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided.
3. Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for over 1 hour will be provided surgical masks and required to wear them while in the court building if the supply is available.

X. CLEANING AND DESINFECTING:

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every two hours using EPA approved cleaning and disinfecting substance per CDC recommendations.
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 against COVID-19 per CDC recommendations.
4. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

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 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: 5/29/2020



Orlando Jimenez, Presiding Judge
Municipal Court, City of Progreso