

COVID-19 Operating Plan for Rhome 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 court, the 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. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than July 13, 2020.

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: This is a small court having one judge, one clerk, and a bailiff. We will self-monitor each other and report any health issues.
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 time.
5. Protective Measures: The public contact counter is protected by a glass screen and hand sanitizers are available to both the public and the staff working in the clerk's office.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
2. On July 13, 2020, at 2:30 pm, we have 50 persons scheduled, all first appearance cases, set, no trials, a normal appearance ratio historically never exceeds a 40 percent appearance, a majority of the appearances will be to show proof of compliance on registration, insurance and driver's license tickets, this docket will likely produce the appearance of 20 people. We make a list of the order of appearance and call cases in first in first out, unless, there are elderly or handicapped individuals which we will accommodate as required. The bailiff will control number of individuals in the court room at any one time so the specially marked and distanced seating capacity is not exceeded. The Judge will begin hearing matters when the first person arrives and that flow will continue through the docket call.
3. On July 15, 2020, the Court will hold the "show cause docket." These cases scheduled for review of non-compliance. In lieu of ordering defendants to physical appear, this docket will be held telephonically. These required hearings give individuals the opportunity to deal with issues involved in the successful completion of the court's requirements.

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. The 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.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by being offered an alternative court date or being seen as soon as 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. No more than two individuals not from the same household will be permitted in the courtroom.

3. The public restroom in the court building is open is cleaned after each court date.
4. Public common areas, including breakrooms, have been closed to the public.

Gallery

1. 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. The Gallery ordinarily seats 50 persons; however the safe inside the courtroom seating will be restricted to 8 safe zones or persons. Individuals will to be directed to seating court by the bailiff.
2. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating.
3. In the courtroom, the witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk 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, outside of the courtroom, and in bathroom.
2. Tissues have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, and on the judges' benches.
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.

Screenings

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, a staff person 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. Additionally, this staff person 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 and mask.

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.

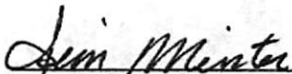
Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned after being vacated by the defendant.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtroom and at the end of each day the courtroom is used. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

Other

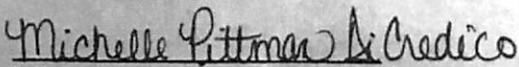
I have met with the City Mayor, City Administrator, and Clerk of the Court to develop this Plan. I have also provided a draft copy to Associate Judge Renee Culp for suggestions and to assure operational consistency.

June 10, 2020



Jim Minter
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Acknowledged and approved:



Michelle Pittman Di Credico
Mayor, City of Rhome, Texas