

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

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the building housing the courts, the Municipal Court of **The City of Richardson** 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 mayor and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. The Court will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than **June 24, 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. Judges and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: Staff will self-monitor and will immediately report any symptoms or exposure to his/her supervisor.
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 in 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 when dealing with the public. Judges and court staff will be required to utilize face coverings, practice social distancing as much as practical, and will practice appropriate hygiene recommendations outside of assisting the public while in judges' chambers, private offices, and non-public areas of the court building.
5. Protective Measures:
 - a. Frequent handwashing is encouraged.
 - b. Hand sanitizer is strategically placed throughout the building.
 - c. Doors will remain propped open to avoid touching door handles in non-public areas of the court building when court is not in session.
 - d. Signatures will be required only if necessary.
 - e. Personal contact with staff by the public will be kept to a minimum by requesting visitors to upload documents to the court for submission.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
 - a. The volume in a municipal court is substantially higher than other types of courts in Texas. With that in mind, the lobby will be open Monday through Friday for walk-in business at the clerk's service windows. The lobby floor will have 6' floor markings by where lines form. A bailiff will monitor the lobby to ensure social distancing. Lobby seating availability will be clearly marked consistent with social distancing. Occupancy of the lobby will be reduced to comply with social distancing.
 - b. Dockets will be held Monday through Thursday in a manner consistent with social distancing.
 - c. Courtroom gallery seating will be limited to 23 people (25% of total seating capacity of 95). Available seats will be clearly marked to comply with social distancing guidelines. Occupancy of the courtroom will be reduced to comply with social distancing.

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 by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy are considered to be vulnerable populations.
2. On notices to appear sent to defendants, the court will include information notifying individuals of the ability to contact the court regarding alternative means of appearance if personal appearance in court is a risk to a defendant. This information will also be posted on the court's website. Links to our court webpage and eDocket appearance page are included for your review.
<https://www.cor.net/departments/municipal-court>
<https://www.cor.net/departments/municipal-court/edocket-appearance>
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by allowing them to schedule an alternative method for appearance (eDocket) or reschedule their case(s).

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'.
2. This court does not have an elevator. Therefore, no requirements need to be established for elevator usage.
3. Each restroom has been evaluated to determine the appropriate capacity to ensure social distancing and the maximum capacity will be posted.
4. Public common areas, including breakrooms and snack rooms, have been closed to the public.
5. A one-way flow for entry and exit into and from the courtroom vestibule will be used to maintain appropriate distancing and avoid face-to-face contact. It will be monitored by a Bailiff.

Gallery

6. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom has been determined. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by a Bailiff.
7. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Available limited seating will be clearly marked.

Well

8. Counsel tables, the witness stand, the judge's bench, and bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6' between each space.
9. Protective plexiglass barriers will be installed around the witness stand and at the front of the judge's bench.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building, and strategically throughout the court building.
2. Tissues have been placed in the courtroom.
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.

Screening

1. All persons entering the courtroom vestibule will be required to wear a face covering.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court vestibule, the bailiff will ask them 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 in the last 14 days. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions will be asked to leave the court building. They will be directed to review the court's website for further information regarding rescheduling and/or making an eDocket appearance.
3. In the rare circumstance that an inmate is transported from the detention center, any inmate entering 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. Bailiff and court staff who are screening individuals entering the court vestibule will wear face masks and/or shields and have access to hand sanitizer.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be encouraged to wear face coverings at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them.
3. Individuals who will be entering the courtrooms via the court vestibule will be required to wear face coverings and will be provided face coverings if 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 every 12 hours.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtroom every day the courtroom is used.
3. Janitorial staff has been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
4. Janitorial staff has been trained on proper cleaning techniques and appropriate personal protective equipment.

Other

I have distributed this Operating Plan to all judges of this municipality. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority and mayor, documentation of which is attached. 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: 6/8/2020

Presiding Judge of Municipal Court
City of Richardson, Texas