

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Richmond Municipal Court, Fort Bend County, Texas

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the building housing the court, the court at the **City of Richmond** 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, through the Court Administrator, will maintain regular communication with the Local Health Authority and Mayor to adjust this operating plan as necessary based on conditions in the city.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 1, 2020

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judges and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely may telework when possible.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: Judge, Court Staff and all City employees have been required to wash or sanitize their hands upon entering the facility and will be temperature screened upon arrival. Social distancing will be maintained at least 6 feet from others and employees should clean and disinfect their work area on a daily basis. Employees will be required to wear a face mask when not at their desk.
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.4°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 include scheduling, social distancing, hygiene, screening, face covering and cleaning as described below.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
Scheduling is being implemented to reduce the size of the dockets to ensure there is adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet apart in the courtroom and the court lobby. Remote hearings via ZOOM teleconferencing will be utilized when possible.

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 Presiding 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' website and in conspicuous locations around the court building.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by remote hearings where possible, and individual court hearings when necessary. If scheduled for court hearings they can check in first (skip the line) and the Judge will see them prior to seeing other defendants.

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 restroom has been evaluated to determine the appropriate capacity to ensure social distancing and the maximum capacity of one (1) has been posted on each restroom door.
3. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff and has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.
4. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk's 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 each bathroom.
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 in the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the bailiff or 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.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the bailiff or court staff will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.4°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 100.4°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 face masks, gloves and face shield.

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.

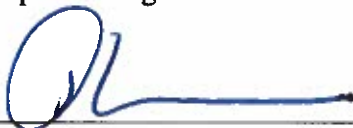
Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned regularly.
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

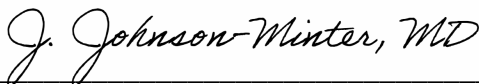
I have attempted to confer with all Judges and Staff of this Court regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority and Mayor. I will ensure that the Judges and Staff of the Court covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/26/2020



Phyllis A. Ross

Presiding Judge of Municipal Court



Jacquelyn Minter, MD

Local Health Authority, Fort Bend County