



COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Schertz Municipal Court, Guadalupe County

(Modified January 4, 2021)

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 courts of Schertz Municipal 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, maximum group size, and other restrictions and precautions.
2. All judges will conduct all proceedings remotely unless a defendant notifies the court in writing that it is impossible for them to do so to an inability to obtain the technical equipment or a physical disability. The judge will not allow anyone to appear in person unless they meet this criteria.
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 June 1, 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: the judge and court staff will self-monitor for symptoms. Personnel have been instructed to not report to court and to notify their supervisor immediately if they experience symptoms described in item 3 below. During the workday, should any personnel begin experiencing the described symptoms, they will notify their supervisor immediately so they may be allowed to leave the court building.
3. Judge and Court Staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.0°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. The judge and court staff will be required to practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times. Face coverings will be worn as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines.
5. Protective Measures: In case a Judge or court staff has any of the above symptoms they will be sent home. The Judge or court staff will not be allowed to return to work unless the individual obtains a medical professional note clearing the individual for return.
6. Protective Measures: Plexiglas guards for the judge, clerk, and witness table will be installed in the court room to protect staff. Clerks at the front counter are currently protected by a locked door and glass service windows. Gloves, anti-bacterial wipes and masks are available for court staff to use.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Court dates will be scheduled on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month with an optional 3rd Thursday of the month. No more than 18 people will be scheduled to appear in person. The first hour will be allocated for those meeting the requirements of in person hearings. The following three hours will be for virtual court.
2. No persons will be allowed in the courtroom unless they have business before the Court. The exceptions will be for parents/guardians of a juvenile or minor. All other individuals shall practice social distancing either in the court lobby or outside. Persons who fail to practice the social distancing guidelines in the lobby area may be asked to leave the premises.
3. Defendants have been encouraged to exercise their available options via phone, fax, emails and mail in lieu of appearing in person.

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, docket 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 on the bulletin board at the entrance of the court building,
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by being seated first and will be seen first. They will also be given detailed options to take care of their offense without making an appearance or allowed to reset their hearing or trial until such time they can safely appear in person.

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. Floor markers are paced at the customer service window to enforce the 6 feet distance.
3. 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.
4. Public court common areas have been closed to the public.

Gallery

5. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of the courtroom has been determined and seats have been modified to enforce the required social distancing. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
6. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing. No seating will be allowed in any area of the courts walkway.

Well

7. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk, 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 entrance to the building, outside of the courtroom, clerks counter and outside of bathrooms.
2. Tissues have been placed at the witness stand, on the judges' benches and the court counter.
3. Court Staff will sign defendants in, eliminating pen sharing.
4. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations of the courts common area.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter any common court area of the building on court dates, the bailiffs or court security will ask the individuals if they are feeling feverish, have a cough, sore throat, body aches, problems breathing, loss of taste or smell, joint pain or nausea/vomiting/diarrhea 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 denied admittance to the court building.

2. When individuals attempt to enter any common court area of the building, the bailiffs or court security will use a thermal temperature reading to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.0°F will be denied admittance to the court.
3. Anyone who enters and appears to have other COVID-19 symptoms will be immediately taken to the side and questioned about their symptoms. If necessary, they will be required to leave and will be advised to call the court.
4. Staff who are screening individuals entering the courts common area will be provided personal protective equipment, including face mask and disposable gloves.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering any part of the courts common area will be required to wear a face coverings at all times. Face mask must be over the nose and mouth and secured under the chin.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring face covering with them, if the individual does not have a face covering, one may be provided.


Cleaning

1. Court cleaning staff will clean the court window every mornings, midday and at the end of business day. All flat counter surfaces, glass partition, door handles will be cleaned with a germ-killing antiseptic.
2. Court cleaning staff will clean the courtroom before and after each session.
3. Court 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.
5. Each pen at the clerks window will be sanitized with the appropriate cleaning supplies.

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 judges in the Schertz Municipal Court covered by this Operating Plan will conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

CONSULTATION – RECRETIFICATION OF THE COURT OPERATING PLAN

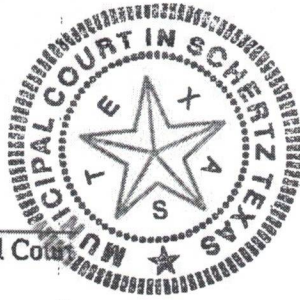
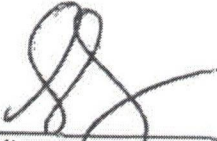
I certify that Schertz Municipal Court has consulted with my office regarding this operating plan. The plan provides sufficient health and safety protocols to permit in-person proceedings with the current local pandemic conditions. Court staff will be taking the necessary precautions to protect individuals entering the Municipal Court.



Mayor, Ralph Gutierrez
City of Schertz
Schertz, Texas
Guadalupe County, Texas

Jan 5, 2021
Date

Date: 5/19/2020
Revised: 1/04/2021



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court
Darrell Dullnig
Schertz, Texas
Guadalupe County, Texas

1-5-2021
Date