



**SPRING VALLEY**  
V I L L A G E

## COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Spring Valley Village Municipal Court, Harris County Judiciary

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 **Spring Valley Village** 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 communicate with local health authority as needed and county judge 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 4, 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: maintain a 6 feet social distance.
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.4°F, fever or chills, cough, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, or having been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19 will not be permitted to enter the building and should seek medical attention.
4. Judges and court staff will be required to practice social distancing and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: practicing social distancing, having hand sanitizer, tissue, and waste bins available, and hand washing as often as needed.
6. All staff member have been notified via email and provided with is a list of symptoms of COVID-19, how to stop the spread, where to get tested, proper hand washing, cleaning and disinfecting, and how to properly wear mask.

### **Scheduling**

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:  
The docket will be evenly split and staggered as follows: 1/3 of the docket will be set at 8:00 am, 1/3 will be set at 9:00 am, and the remaining 1/3 will be set at 10:00 am. The Court Administrator/ Prosecutor will also contact defendants prior to the scheduled court session to resolve as many citations as possible to reduce the number of defendants having to physically come into court.

### **Vulnerable Populations**

1. Individuals who are 65 and older 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 the courts' websites and in conspicuous locations around the court building (a copy of which is attached).
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by having the Prosecutor contact the defendant prior to coming to court to avoid exposure to any illnesses. Defendants will also be allowed to reset to another date with a later time. .

### **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. Floor markers have been placed on the floor so the lobby will remain open with everyone maintaining a safe 6 foot social distance.
4. Social distance signage will be placed throughout the building.

#### *Gallery*

5. 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 and bailiff.
6. The seating in the gallery of the courtroom will be set up to provide appropriate social distancing.

#### *Well*

7. The counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and bailiff seating will be arranged in such a way to provide social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.

### **Hygiene**

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the Court payment window, outside of the courtroom, and outside of bathrooms.
2. Hand sanitizer will be available to the prosecutor and the judge.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations of the court building.
4. Tissue and waste bins will be available for public use.
5. Proper handwashing signage will be placed in all restrooms.

### **Screening**

1. Bailiffs have provided with is a list of symptoms of COVID-19, how to stop the spread, where to get tested, proper hand washing, cleaning and disinfecting, and how to properly wear mask.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the bailiff will utilize the symptoms checklist included in the Governor's order. All individuals who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.4°F, have fever or chills, cough, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new

loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, or having been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19 will be reset.

3. Bailiffs who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, tissue, and waste bin.
4. Signage will be added to entrance doors informing visitors to stay home if they are sick.

#### **Face Coverings**

1. All individuals entering the court building will be encouraged to wear face coverings and/or wear face masks.
2. All individuals will be notified of recommendations to wear face masks on orders setting hearings, docket notices, the city website, and by phone and by email when available.

#### **Cleaning and Disinfecting**

1. Cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned daily with EPA-registered disinfectants.
2. Frequently touched surfaces (i.e., doorknobs, handrails, light switches, and clerk's window will be disinfected more often with EPA- registered disinfectants.
3. Cleaning staff obtained EPA-registered disinfecting and cleaning supplies.

#### **Other**

The City of Spring Valley Village will make provisions for zoom hearings if requested by any party.

I have conferred with the Mayor, the City Administrator, the Court Administrator, and our Local Health Authority 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, prosecutors, and all court staff conduct proceedings consistent with this Operating Plan.



Date: 6/5/2020

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Presiding Judge of Municipal Court