

## **COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Waskom 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, **Waskom 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 use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. The Municipal Court Judge 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 6, 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: if Judge or Staff feel ill, or have COVID-19 symptoms, will immediately seek medical advice.
3. Judges or 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. 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: Staff will sanitize all areas open to the public, including door handles, chairs, etc.

### **Scheduling**

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: The court is open daily to foot traffic, and no more than three (3) persons will be allowed in lobby. After 6 July 2020, hearings/non jury trials will be scheduled starting 21 July 2020, and every two months after.

## **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. 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 scheduling cases an hour apart, to allow for sanitizing.

## **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 can only occupy one person. Court Staff will sanitize after each use.
3. Public common areas, including breakrooms and snackrooms, have been closed to the public.

### Gallery

4. 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.
5. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row, and six feet apart.

### Well

6. In each courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk, court reporter, 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. A hand sanitizer dispenser has been placed in the lobby, and a sign posted on bathroom door.
2. Tissues have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, on the judges' benches.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations of the court building.

## **Screening**

When individuals attempt to enter the court building, 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.

1. 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, Court Staff 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 masks, gloves, and sanitizer.

## **Face Coverings**

1. All individuals entering the court building should consider the wearing face coverings.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them.

## **Cleaning**

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at every other day.
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 conferred with the Associate Judge of this Court regarding this Operating Plan. I will ensure that the Associate Judge Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 16 June 2020

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Presiding Judge of Municipal Court