

COVID-19 Operating Plan for Westlake Municipal Court, Tarrant/Denton 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 Westlake 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. The Honorable Judge Bradley will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and the Court Administrator and adjust this operating plan as necessary.
3. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than July 08, 2020.

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: The Judge, Prosecutor, Bailiff, and court staff must pass a temperature and health questionnaire screening prior to reporting to work in the Court offices, or courtroom. Each person must also sign in upon entering the building to aid in contact tracing.
2. 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 to enter the building and should seek medical advice.
3. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times.
4. Protective Measures: All employees will be provided a mask and an individual hand sanitizer. The Court lobby window has protective glass which provides a barrier between the defendants and court clerks.
5. Protective Measures: Judges and court staff are provided with hand sanitizer, Lysol to sanitize all workstations, face coverings and gloves. Sanitizer stations are installed in the lobby and court for the public and defendants to utilize. The public and defendants will be allowed into the court lobby one at a time. We will have signs in the hall outside of the court lobby informing the public and defendants of the safety measures we are taking. We will have a table set up with protective glass where a clerk will be directing defendants into the lobby. Options available to handle cases by phone, email, mail, online payment and lobby drop box are being encouraged to reduce any in-person dealings with court cases. Notices for these options have been posted on the court's website. Before any signatures are needed, the defendants/public will be required to use hand sanitizer. Pens used by the defendants/public will be sprayed with disinfectant between use.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: We will have control of the number of defendants scheduled for court proceedings. Notices will state that the Court will be taking safety measures to ensure everyone's safety. We will have signs on the wall and floor so that the defendants are informed of social distancing of at least 6 feet apart and that we will be allowing one person at time in the lobby. Bailiff and court personnel will be checking and directing defendants who will be reporting for court.

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. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating, and chairs will be placed 6 feet apart.
2. Spacing requirements will be marked on the floor to ensure proper distance between defendants as they are screened and signed in.

3. The Prosecutor's conference room will have excess chairs removed, and the remaining chairs will be placed to maintain at least 6 feet of distance.

Well

1. 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 courtroom. Hand sanitizer bottles have been placed at the Judge's bench, the Prosecutor's conference room, and the screening/sign-in table.

2. As we still need to obtain defendant signatures on court order acknowledgements and credit card authorizations, hand sanitizer will be placed at the court lobby window.

3. The lobby will be sanitized multiple times a day by court personnel to include wiping down the door handles, writing instruments after each use, and the lobby window/desk.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the courtroom, the Bailiff 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, have 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. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions will be refused admittance to the court building.

2. Defendants will be required to sign in which will aid in the effort of contact tracing.

3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the courtroom will be provided personal protective equipment, including a protective mask, gloves, and sanitizer.

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 staff will sanitize the door handles as needed. Surfaces such as the Prosecutor's conference room table will be sanitized after each pretrial hearing.

2. Court staff will sanitize shared writing instruments after each use.

This plan has been reviewed and approved by the Westlake Municipal Court Judge. 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 court personnel in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Judge Bradley

Date

6/14/20