



COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Whitesboro Municipal Court

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 facilities, the courts of the City of Whitesboro 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 Whitesboro Municipal Court will maintain regular communication with the City Administrator, and the City of Whitesboro Emergency Management Coordinator and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the City of Whitesboro Municipal Court. (Whitesboro EMC maintains regular communication with the local county health authority)
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 will perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible.
2. Judges or court staff monitoring requirements: all staff will self-monitor and will immediately report any symptoms or exposure to a supervisor.
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have a measured temperature 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, of 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 practice social distancing and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: court staff working the service window is separated from the public by an enclosed sneeze guard receptionist window. Staff is provided hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes for work stations. Gloves and masks are permitted should court staff elect to wear such personal protective equipment. Hand sanitizer is provided in the lobby for defendants and City Hall visitors. Frequent Hand washing is required and hand sanitizer is strategically located throughout the workplace.

Scheduling

The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: all defendants will be encouraged to call, email, or mail any paperwork and payments to avoid having in-person contact. Options available to handle cases by phone, email, mail, and 24 hour drop box will be encouraged to reduce in-person dealing with court cases.

1. If at all possible, teleconferencing will be implemented;
2. Pre-Trial hearings will be held remotely when possible;
3. No jury trials will be scheduled until further guidance is issued by the Office of Court Administration.
4. When in-person appearances are necessary; we will conduct all scheduled dockets in a manner consistent with social distancing guidelines. Each docket will allow no more than (10) persons other than court staff in the courtroom at a time including defendants and the parent or guardian of any juvenile.
5. Window walk-in
 - a. Lobby will open from 8 a. m. to 12 p.m. and 1p.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.
 - b. Lobby is limited to (2) two persons due to the size of the lobby while maintaining 6 (six) feet of distance unless they are from the same household.
6. Hearings before the Judge
 - a. Hearings will be scheduled on Thursdays based on availability of the court room beginning at 10:00 a.m. throughout the day.
 - b. Each hearing will consist of no more than (10) ten persons other than court staff in the courtroom at a time including defendants and the parent or guardian of any juvenile.

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. Court Staff 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 Court's website and in conspicuous locations around the court building. The notice will contain the following language: ***"COVID-19 NOTICE- Please contact the court to make other arrangements for a hearing if you are over age 65 or have 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."***
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by resetting their court date, or conduct the proceedings remotely. (Vulnerable populations must notify the 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.
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. Public common areas, including break rooms, and snack rooms, have been closed to the public.

Gallery

1. 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.
2. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing. Seating has been strategically measured and placed for adequate social distancing.

Well

1. In each courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk 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 in the lobby. Sanitizer is available in the entrance of the courtroom, outside of the bathrooms and clerks window.
2. Tissues have been placed in the courtroom.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations around the court building.

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. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions will be refused admittance to the courtroom.
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 equal or exceed 100.0°F will be refused admittance to the court building.
3. Staff screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including gloves and a face mask, if desired.

Face coverings

1. Individuals will be required to wear face coverings in the court building.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings or disposable face coverings with them. Individual Defendants who do not wear cloth face coverings or disposable face coverings may be rescheduled, at the discretion of the Judge.
3. Individuals that do not bring a face covering, the court will have disposable masks available.

Cleaning

1. Court staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned every 4 hours.
2. Court staff will periodically wipe down frequently touched surfaces such as doors and countertops throughout the day.
3. Court staff will clean the courtroom after every hearing, between morning and afternoon proceedings, and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
4. Court staff and court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.

In developing the plan, communication with the City of Whitesboro Emergency Management Coordinator, as well as information from the local health authority and the Office of Court Administration Court Guidance was considered. This Operating Plan will be presented before the Whitesboro City Council on June 9, 2020. A copy of this order is being provided to the City Secretary, City Administrator, and the City Emergency Management Coordinator. The Whitesboro Municipal Court staff and judge of this court are being provided with a copy of this Operating Plan and are to conduct proceedings and provide the necessary notices to defendants consistent with the plan.

Date: May 29, 2020



Rachael T. Dockery
Rachael T. Dockery, Presiding Judge
City of Whitesboro Municipal Court

JUNE 09, 2020

MAYOR
W.D. WELCH

x *W.D. Welch*

CITY ADMINISTRATOR
MICHAEL MARTER

x *Michael Marter*

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR
JEFF PATTERSON

x *Jeff Patterson*

CITY SECRETARY
TERESA NINO

x *Teresa Nino*

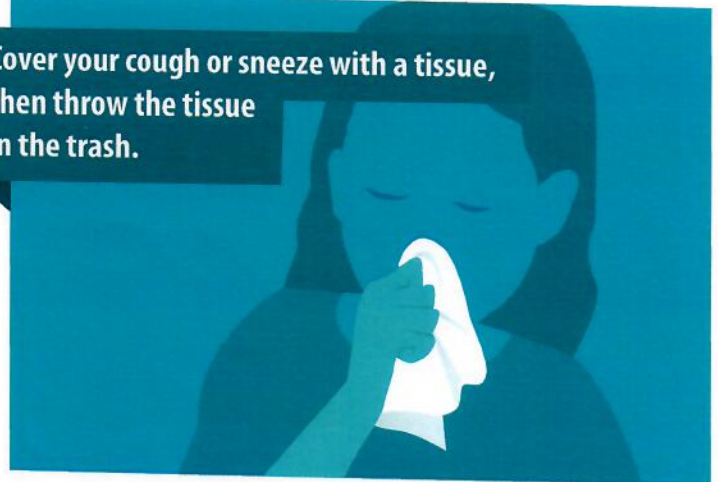
STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

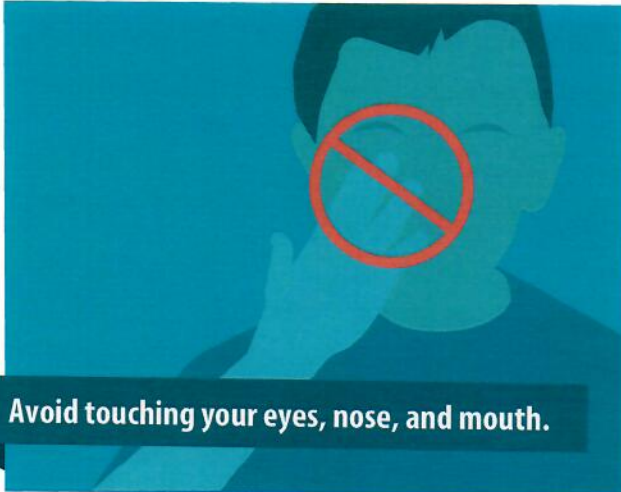
Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

