

COVID-19 Operating Plan for Fort Bend County Justice Court, Precinct 3

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 court of Precinct 3 Fort Bend County Justice Court will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. The Court 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 Court will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. The Judge will maintain regular communication with the local health authority the County. The Court will begin setting non-essential in-person cases no sooner than June 2, 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: to ensure all CDC guidelines will be followed.
3. The Judge or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100°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 wear face coverings while away from their work station, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: The staff is practicing social distance measures. Their workstations are six feet apart. They are also requires to wear a face covering at any time they leave their workstations. Each workstation is provided hand sanitizer including each location where there is interaction with the public.

Scheduling

1. The court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court room. Social distancing in the court room will be ensured by markers indicating where occupants

must stand or sit. These hearing will not be conducted until after June 1, 2020. These dockets will consist of a small number of cases to allow participants to have their cases heard promptly and leave the court room within a several minutes.

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, 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.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by resetting those dockets to a later date to appear in person, while social distancing and meeting other safety protocol as set forth herein, or set forth by future direction of the local health authority.

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. There are no public common areas, other than the lobby to the building, which has been marked to ensure social distancing.
3. The maximum capacity to the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by our court staff and court bailiff. The courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating.
4. In the 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. Hand sanitizer dispensers and tissues have been placed at the entrances to the courtroom.
2. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations on each floor of the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the courtroom, a screener provided by Fort Bend County 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, screener 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 courtroom.
3. Individuals entering the courtroom will be strongly encouraged to wear personal protective equipment.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the courtroom will be strongly encouraged to wear face coverings at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided if available.
3. Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for over 1 hour will be provided surgical masks and required to wear them while in the court building if the supply is available.

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every evening or as further established by the local health authority and county facilities operations hours.
2. Court building cleaning staff has been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

Other

1. At least two deputies will be on hand to ensure social distancing is enforced. Pre-taped areas on the floor and on the benches of the court room are in place.
2. During a court proceeding, the bailiff will handle all necessary documents from the litigant to the judge and upon return of the document.

In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority.

Date: 05/28/2020



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Justice of the Peace, Pct. 3

Approved by Local Health Authority:

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Approved by County Judge:

KP George
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County Judge, Fort Bend County