

## COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Kinney County Judiciary

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the buildings that house the district, county, and justice courts of Kinney County, the courts of **Kinney County** will implement the following protective measures:

### General

1. All judges shall 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. This Operating Plan complies with the requirements and guidance of the Office of Court Administration.
3. All judges will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely, rather than in person, whenever and to the extent possible.
4. The local administrative district judge will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and County Judge and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the Kinney County Court system.
5. 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 who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible.
2. Judges 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, body aches, joint pain, nausea/vomiting, 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 time.
4. Protective Measures: If a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 was in the court building, no one shall enter the court building until the building has been fully sanitized.

## Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building and to prevent exposure in common areas.
2. All proceedings, both essential and non-essential, should occur remotely (such as by teleconferencing, or other means) unless litigants or other court participants are unable to successfully participate in a remote hearing for reasons beyond the court's control. Hybrid hearings, where specific witnesses or litigants require special accommodations in the court building, are permitted. Each court building shall establish an isolated and secure area for accommodating a litigant or witness during court hearings.
3. In-person jury trials are prohibited until at least August 1, 2020, and thereafter only in accordance with the guidelines from the Office of Court Administration.
4. All Court Coordinators shall communicate and cooperate to ensure that in-person court hearings do not overlap. Counties will take all reasonable steps to ensure that Commissioner's Court meetings and other meetings in the court building that are open to the public do not overlap with court settings.

## Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, courthouse security personnel or county staff will ask the individuals if they are feeling feverish; have a cough, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, body aches, joint pain, nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, 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 court building.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, courthouse security personnel or county 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 100°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 The County is not required to provide surgical masks.



2. No more than two individuals not from the same household will be permitted in an elevator. If more than one individual from the same household is in an elevator, no other individuals will be permitted in the elevator.
3. 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.
4. Public common areas, including breakrooms, have been closed to the public.

#### ***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.
6. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

#### ***Well***

7. 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. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building, outside of elevators on each floor, outside of each courtroom, and outside of bathrooms.
2. Tissues have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, on the judges' benches, and in the hallways.
3. 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.

#### **Cleaning**

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every four hours on days that court is in session.
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

1. Bailiffs and courthouse security personnel are authorized to enforce all provisions of this Operating Plan.
2. Bailiffs and courthouse security personnel may refuse entry to anyone who does not comply with this Operating Plan.
3. Any person may be removed from the courtroom and court building at the discretion of the Bailiff or courthouse security personnel.
4. Violation of this Operating Plan may result in expulsion from the court building and/or constitute contempt of court, subjecting the violator to a fine of up to \$500 and a jail sentence of up to 180 days.

I have attempted to confer with all judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority, regional public health authority, and county judge, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/28/2020



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Local Administrative District Judge

**REQUEST FOR ACCESS FORM – VULNERABLE POPULATIONS**

**CURRENT SECURITY LEVEL: \_\_\_\_\_**

**NOTICE:** If you are over 65 or have a serious underlying health condition, you **MUST** complete this form to request access to the court building. Your refusal to do so will result in denial of admittance or expulsion from the building. Your request may be denied in accordance with the COVID Operating Plan.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Serious Health Conditions** include high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, decreased lung capacity, diabetes, obesity, asthma, compromised immune system (including by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy), or receiving oxygen therapy.

1. I understand that I am a member of a Vulnerable Population (age 65-72) or a Highly Vulnerable Population (age 73 and above, or any age person with a Serious Health Condition).
2. I understand that as a member of a vulnerable or highly vulnerable population, I am at heightened risk of serious complication or death due to COVID-19.
3. I understand that some persons infected with COVID-19 may not show any symptoms or even be aware that they are infected and/or contagious.
4. I understand that by entering the courthouse I risk exposure to someone currently infected with COVID-19, and that I may become infected with COVID-19 despite the best efforts of county and courthouse officials and staff to minimize exposure.
5. I understand that there are alternatives to my personal appearance at any court proceeding, and that accommodations will be made for me so that I need not enter the common areas of the building to conduct my business.
6. I have read the COVID-19 Operating Plan and agree to comply with all requirements of the Plan, including face coverings, social distancing, and hygiene.
7. I assume the risks described above, and request entry to the court building. I understand that I can be refused entry to the building, or removed at any time, at the discretion of courthouse security, the county judge, or the judge presiding over any court proceeding.

\_\_\_\_\_  
[YOUR SIGNATURE]