

COVID-19 Operating Plan Alamo Heights Municipal Court



Please Contact the Court Clerk with any question

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December 2020

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Alamo Heights Municipal Court, Bexar County, Texas 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 courts of **Alamo Heights 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 contested proceedings remotely, if so requested by the parties.
3. The presiding judge of the municipal court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority, city manager and mayor, and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. Judges will begin setting uncontested in-person proceedings no sooner than August 31, 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 and necessary.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: Temperatures will be taken of all City Staff upon entering City Hall. The staff will fill out a Pre-Entry Health Screening Sheet.
3. 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.
4. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: Staff are provided with hand sanitizer, sanitizing spray for workstations, gloves, and masks. Hand Sanitizer is provided in the lobby for the public. The public/defendants are only allowed into city hall 8 at a time. Chairs are placed 6 feet from each other. Clerks working the counter will be separated from the public by security glass. Options available to handle cases by phone, email, mail, and a 24 hour 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
6. Cleaning products will be available in the courtroom, offices, and break area for use by court staff to sanitize and clean area.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
Court Hearing are held 2 Fridays per month 8am-12pm. Defendants will be screened, temperature checks and fill out questionnaire. After screening, defendants will sign into court with their name and phone number. Each docket will have a max of 16 defendants. The first set of 8 will enter the Court Room as allowed by social distancing practices. Any other defendants there-after will wait outside or in his/her vehicle. Defendants will be called/text to enter the courtroom when their time is ready. Upon entering the courtroom, defendants will be required to use hand sanitizer and masks. Once seen by Judge, Prosecutor, and the Clerk, defendants will depart, and next person will come in.

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. Information on orders, settings docket hearings will be posted on the courts' websites.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by a reset, phone conference or video docket.

Social Distancing

1. Only the defendant, defendant's attorney, spouse or parent or guardian will be permitted in the court building and 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 of 2 has been posted on the restroom door.
3. Public common areas, including breakrooms, have been closed to the public.
4. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, and the judge's bench, seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.
5. 8 Chairs for the defendants have been positioned 6 feet apart.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building, outside the courtroom, and outside of bathrooms.
2. Tissues and or disinfecting wipes 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 Services "Stop the Spread of Germs" flyer is posted in lobby, breakrooms and bathrooms.
4. No food or drinks allowed in the courtroom.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, City personnel 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 court building.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, City personnel will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 99.6°F will be refused admittance to the court building.
3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including face mask, gloves, and hand 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.
3. Individuals will be required to wear mask at all times while in the City Hall / Municipal Court.

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned every 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.



I have conferred with the other judge who shares the courtroom in the court building regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority, city manager and mayor. I will ensure that the judges, prosecutor and court staff of the court covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan. This plan will be reviewed as needed and updated when appropriate.



Joseph H Vives
Presiding Judge
Alamo Heights Municipal Court

12/24/20
Date



I have consulted with the Judges and the City Manager on the Covid 19 Operating Plan for the City of Alamo Heights Municipal Court. I will ensure that the judges, prosecutor and court staff covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan. This plan will be reviewed as needed and updated when appropriate.

Bobby Rosenthal

Bobby Rosenthal
Mayor
City of Alamo Heights, Texas

12/22/2020

Date