

## **COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Alvarado, Texas City Judiciary**

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, the court of the **City of Alvarado, Texas** will implement the following protective measures:

### **General**

1. All judges and court staff 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 presiding judge of the municipal court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and mayor and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
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 who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible.
2. Judges, court staff and all employees shall have daily temperature checks upon entering the court building. If a staff member has a temperature of greater than 99.9 they will be required to leave until they are temperature free for 48 hours. Staff and employees with any symptom of COVID-19, or who learn they have had close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19, will NOT ENTER THE ALVARADO MUNICIPAL COURT, and will alert the Judge of the Court or supervisor. Judges, court staff and all employees will be required to wash their or use hand sanitizer before entering the building.
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 shall be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations, and safety measures for COVID-19 at all times.
5. Protective Measures: temperatures will be checked, hand sanitizer will be available at multiple locations. The number of people allowed in the courtroom/lobby will be at or below the 25% threshold of the occupancy levels posted on the building.

### **Scheduling**

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: The Court will schedule in person hearing in order to allow attorneys and individuals to appear in person, as necessary. Courtroom attendance shall be kept to the minimum number the Judge needs to hear a case. Court schedules shall be split adding additional times established to reduce occupancy in the court building. Dockets shall be scheduled every thirty minutes with no more than ten defendants on each docket.
2. The Court will conduct hearings via Zoom or Telephonic hearings to the extent possible.
3. Jury trials are currently prohibited by the Office of Court Administration. Procedures and guidelines for Jury trials will be addressed after additional recommendations are received from the OCA and a Alvarado Municipal Court Plan can be put in place.
4. No more than 10 individuals, including court staff, shall be allowed in the courtroom at any one time. Others shall be encouraged to remain in their motor vehicles and shall be called by court staff as their respective case is called.

### **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. Each 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, if possible, and in conspicuous locations around the court building.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by scheduling all proceedings, both essential and non-essential, to occur remotely (such as by teleconferencing, videoconferencing, telephone, 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.

In such an event, the Court may reschedule the respective cases until such time as may be appropriate.

### **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. If same is available for use by the public, 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 breakrooms and snack rooms, have been closed to the public.

### ***Gallery***

4. 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.
5. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited.

### ***Well***

6. 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 any elevators on each floor, outside of each courtroom, and outside of any public 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.

### **Screening**

4. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, Court staff 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.

5. 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 equals or exceeds 100.0°F will be refused admittance to the court building.
6. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including gloves, goggles, face shields, and/or face masks, when appropriate. All types of PPE must be: Selected based upon the hazard to the worker, properly fitted and periodically refitted, as applicable, consistently and properly worn when required, regularly inspected, maintained and replaced, as necessary, and properly removed, cleaned, and stored or disposed of, as applicable, to avoid contamination of self, others, or the environment.

### **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, 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 prior to each scheduled court docket.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms between every docket hearing date, 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**

A court staff member will meet Defendants at security and give them the option of waiting in the courtroom, lobby (if there is space) or waiting in their car in the parking lot. Upon entering the courthouse a facemask will be provided if they don't have one. If their temperature is under 99.9 degrees they will proceed through security. The marshal will also enforce spacing in the lobby. A different marshal will handle security and spacing in the courtroom. Defendants will be advised they should plan on attending without additional family members (excluding juveniles) because of the

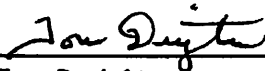
limited room when enforcing social distancing guidelines, however it will be kept in mind the hearings are open to the public.

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 the judges of the court will conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

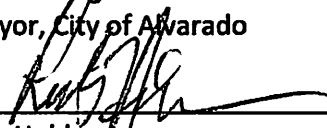
Date: 6/5/2020

  
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Terri G. Wilson  
Presiding Judge of Municipal Court

Date: 6/3/20

  
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Tom Durington  
Mayor, City of Alvarado

Date: 6/3/20

  
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Rick Holden  
City Manager, City of Alvarado