

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Desoto Municipal Court, Dallas County

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 Municipal Court of the City of DeSoto, Dallas County, Texas will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. The presiding Judge 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 presiding judge will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. The City of DeSoto The presiding judge of the municipal court is provided with regular updates from the local health authority and county judge and mayor and will adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city of DeSoto.
4. The presiding judge will begin permitting persons in limited numbers, observing social distancing to voluntarily come to the Court to resolve their outstanding citations no sooner than May 18, 2020. However, a defendant can still communicate with the court through Zoom as stated on the website of the DeSoto Municipal Court.

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. The presiding judge and court staff will return to the court offices on May 18, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: All court staff will be required to wear protective masks and maintain at least 6 feet of social distance from each other and the public. Further, the staff will not meet with anyone from the public except through the protective and secure customer service window.
3. If the presiding judge or court staff 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 come to or stay at work and will be instructed to seek medical advice.
4. Protective Measures: The DeSoto Marshals will ensure that the social distancing is maintained at the customer service windows of the court and in the courtroom.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: No in-person bench trials or trials by jury or in-person mandatory pretrial conferences will occur before June 1, 2020. Further, any defendant shall be given the opportunity to appear in court via Zoom.

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 presiding 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.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by allowing them to appear on zoom at any time during the workday to meet with the presiding judge, prosecutor or clerk, as 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.

Gallery

2. The DeSoto Marshals will control access to the City Council Chamber (i.e. serves as the courtroom) and will assign seats so that the minimum social distancing is maintained. Any number of ten persons will be directed to wait outside of the courtroom at an appropriate social distance from the door to the courtroom and other persons in the atrium area of the Town Center.

Well

3. The courtroom uses a fixed podium that is roughly ten feet from the bench. The counsel tables that are placed on either side of the podium have sufficient space so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between the podium and where the defendant/attorney would be seated on one side of the podium and where the prosecutor will sit on the other side of the podium.

Hygiene

1. The City of DeSoto regularly places hand sanitizer dispensers at the entrances to the building and outside of each courtroom.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the courtroom, a DeSoto Marshal 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 and will be directed to exit the building immediately.

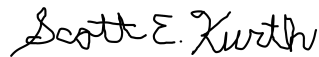
2. Once our order for infrared thermometers is received, when individuals attempt to enter the courtroom a DeSoto Marshal will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperatures equals or exceeds 100.0°F will be refused admittance to the courtroom and will be asked to leave the building immediately.
3. The DeSoto Marshals who are screening individuals entering the courtroom will be provided personal protective equipment, including a mask and gloves.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times.

I will act in good faith to ensure that the foregoing Operating Plan is followed by the Marshals and court staff of the DeSoto Municipal. In developing the Operating Plan, I consulted with the local health authority and the mayor, documentation of which is attached to this plan as Exhibit "A."

Date: 5/26/2020



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court