

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Elgin Municipal Court

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of defendants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the building housing the court, the **City of Elgin Municipal Court** will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. The 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 Judge 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. The Judge will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than October 1, 2020

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. The Judge and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible.
2. The Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: Personnel will be instructed to not report for duty and notify their supervisor immediately if they should experience symptoms described in item 3 immediately following. During the workday, should any personnel begin experiencing the described symptoms, they will notify their supervisor immediately so they may be allowed to leave the workplace.
3. Judge or court staff who feel unwell, feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.0°F, or have new or worsening signs or symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea, or having close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19 will not be permitted to enter the building. In this instance, the Judge or court staff member will not be permitted to return to the building without clearance from a medical physician to do so.
4. The Judge and court staff are required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times.
5. Protective Measures: Court staff are separated from the public by a locked door and glass service windows. Staff are provided with hand sanitizer, spray sanitizer, sanitizing wipes for workstations, and masks. Hand sanitizer is provided in the lobby for customers. Signs and floor markings are placed in the lobby area and service windows

to encourage social distancing while defendants wait to be assisted in the lobby. Lobby customer service counter and transaction trays are disinfected a minimum of 3 times per day. Defendants can exercise their available options via phone, fax, email, and regular mail in lieu of coming to the office in person. Plexiglass shields are installed on the Bench in the courtroom to protect the Judge and clerks.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: No in-person hearings or trials will be scheduled until after October 1, 2020. After October 1st, individuals will be allowed to schedule in-person appearances with the Judge, to include bench trials. Social distancing will be practiced, and no more than 25 defendants will be allowed in the courtroom at one time. Between hearings, courtroom surfaces will be cleaned with disinfectant. Defendants will not be allowed to bring other guests with them to a hearing. Juvenile defendants shall only be accompanied by one parent/guardian and no other guests, including siblings. Accommodations will be made to comply with the Open Courts provision, but at no time will the courtroom exceed 50% of its normal courtroom capacity. Jury trial scheduling will be dependent on orders and guidance issued by the Supreme Court of Texas, Court of Criminal Appeals, and the Office of Court Administration.

Vulnerable Populations

1. individuals who are over age 65 years of age 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 court's website and in conspicuous locations around the court building (a copy of which is attached).
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by allowing to reset their hearing or trial until such time that they can safely appear in person.

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. 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.

Well

3. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk and bailiff seating are arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space or protected by a plexiglass barrier.

Hygiene

1. A hand sanitizer dispenser is located in the court building lobby and outside of bathrooms.
2. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted on each door of the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the bailiff 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, the bailiff will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100°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 medical grade masks and gloves.

Face Coverings

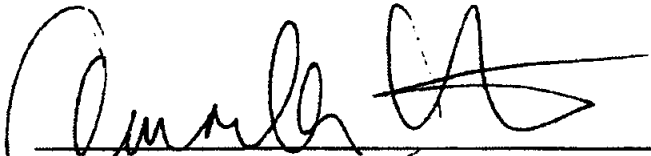
1. All individuals entering the court building to attend a court session will be required to wear face coverings at all times
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering a disposable face mask will be provided.

Cleaning

- 1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every three hours.

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.
1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the restrooms between morning and afternoon proceedings, and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
2. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.
3. Court staff will clean the courtroom between every hearing.
4. Court staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective against the Coronavirus.

I have attempted to confer with all Municipal Court Personnel in the court building regarding this Operating Plan. 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 all proceedings that occur in the court building covered by this Operating Plan are conducted consistent with the plan.



Presiding Judge Amanda Carter,
City of Elgin Municipal Court

9/15/20
Date

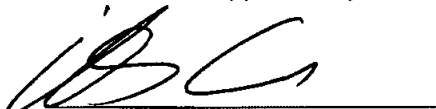
Reviewed and approved by:



Dr. Desmar Walkes, Bastrop County Health Authority

9/16/2020
Date

Reviewed and approved by:



Chris Cannon, Mayor, City of Elgin

9/18/2020
Date