

# **COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Ingleside Municipal Court**

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, Judge, and other individuals entering the Public Safety building housing the Municipal Court, the Municipal Court of the City of Ingleside will implement the following protective measures:

## **General**

1. Judge 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. 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.
3. All Judges will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
4. ~~Non-essential in person proceedings will be scheduled no sooner than June 1, 2020. We will be scheduling our first in person proceedings for June 15, 2020.~~
5. **As of today, all court proceedings will be conducted remotely until further notice.**

## **Judge and Court Staff Health**

1. Judges and Court Staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible. **Office staff will return to work in the office on September 8, 2020. alternate working in office for one week and off or work from home one week.**
2. Judges and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: All staff will self-monitor and will immediately report any symptoms or exposure to the Presiding Judge, Presiding Judge will then report to HR.
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.
5. Protective Measures: Masks, disinfectant spray, disinfectant wipes, hand sanitizer, and frequent handwashing is highly encouraged. **Office staff will make sure the office is cleaned throughout the day. thoroughly before and after their work week in the office.**

## **Scheduling**

1. ~~The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the Public Safety building: We will conduct all scheduled dockets in a manner consistent with social distancing guidelines. We will maintain occupancy in the courtroom and lobby area to five (5) including court staff.~~
2. ~~Accommodations will be made to individuals requesting to appear remotely in lieu of an in person appearance/hearing.~~
3. **All individuals will be scheduled to appear remotely in lieu of an in-person appearance.**

## **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 regarding vulnerable individuals will be included in all mailings and posted on the courts website. Individuals who are in vulnerable populations will have the ability to contact the court to identify themselves as a vulnerable individual and receive appropriate accommodations.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by rescheduling for a date after the pandemic has subsided or by conducting their appearance remotely.
4. **All individuals will be scheduled to appear remotely in lieu of an in-person appearance.**

## **Social Distancing**

1. All persons not from the same household who are permitted in the Public Safety building will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet.
2. Both the men's and women's restroom will only occupy one person at a time.

### *Lobby*

3. ~~The maximum capacity of the lobby will be monitored and enforced by a staff member.~~
4. **With no scheduled hearings, the lobby will be maintained by the city custodian – Defendants will have the opportunity to drop off paperwork or payments by using the courts drop box located next to the court's office door.**
5. The courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to placement of the chairs in the courtroom.

### *Courtroom*

6. ~~Seating will be arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space. The floor will be marked for individuals appearing before the judge to stand.~~
7. ~~Scheduled pre trial/trials – the counsel tables, witness stand, Judge's bench, clerk, and bailiff seating will be arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.~~
8. **All individuals will be scheduled to appear remotely in lieu of an in-person appearance**

## **Hygiene**

1. Hand sanitizer will be provided upon entering the building, in the lobby of the Public Safety building, and upon request inside the courtroom.
2. Tissues will be placed in the lobby and courtroom.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations in the Public Safety building.

## Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the Public Safety building, a staff member will provide the individual with hand sanitizer, a disposable face mask if they do not have a mask of their own, take their temperature and ask the individuals the questions listed on the COVID-19 Active Screening Questionnaire. Individuals with a temperature equal to or above 99.6°F or who answered yes to any of the questions will be refused admittance to the Public Safety Building. They will be advised to call the court to reschedule.
2. All individuals will be scheduled to appear remotely in lieu of an in-person appearance
3. Inmates being transported from the Ingleside Police Department holding facility to the courtroom will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19, have their temperature taken, be given hand sanitizer to sanitize their hands, and be provided with a disposable face mask prior to entering the courtroom. Inmates with symptoms or a temperature equal to or above 99.6°F will not be allowed to enter the courtroom.
4. Magistration proceedings will be conducted by using Video Magistration or inmates will be transported to San Patricio County Jail for Magistration.
5. Staff who are screening individuals entering the Public Safety building will be provided personal protective equipment, including masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and anything else needed.

## Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the Public Safety building and courtroom 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. A staff member will clean the common areas of the Public Safety building and the courtroom so that common spaces are cleaned after each scheduled appearance/hearing and at the end of each day.
2. With no scheduled hearings, the lobby will be maintained by the city custodian.
3. A staff member The city custodian will be provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
4. The staff member city custodian will be trained on proper cleaning techniques and will be provided appropriate personal protective equipment.
5. Staff will adhere to all social distancing requirements and will be spread out to meet all guidelines. Round stickers have been placed every six feet in our lobby to maintain public social distancing, and seating has been removed from the lobby to provide separation. Additionally, seating in the courtroom will be placed accordingly in order to meet social distancing guidelines. With no scheduled hearings, the courtroom will be closed to the public.

I have conferred with all court staff regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority and the mayor, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that court staff will conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: May 27, 2020

July 20, 2020 Revised

September 3, 2020 Revised



Presiding Judge Valarie Glover  
Municipal Court of the City of Ingleside  
San Patricio County, Texas

