

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Lockhart City Municipal Court 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 municipal court, the City of Lockhart 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 proceedings remotely.
3. The presiding judge of the municipal court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and the mayor then adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than July 20, 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. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: we will monitor the temperatures of every court employee at the beginning of each day. Any court employee at 100.0°F or above will go home and be subject to the 14-day self-quarantine requirements unless evaluated and cleared by their physician. If a court employee has had recent exposure to someone with COVID-19 or is having signs and symptoms of the same, the employee will be subject to the same 14-day quarantine requirement.
3. Judges and court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.0°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: Court staff are separated from the public by a locked door and glass service windows. Court staff are separated from each other by plexiglass. Court personnel temperatures will be checked at the beginning of each day, they will be provided appropriate protective equipment, and public health guidelines will be strictly followed.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:

People may not enter the courtroom without an appointment established by an appearance letter or by calling the court to set up an appointment.

All routine, non-essential court business will be conducted at the drive-through window including accepting pleas, taking payments, granting extensions etc.

On hearing or trial dates, defendants will sign in and then wait in their vehicle until contacted by the court. After being seen, defendants will return to their vehicle to wait until their paperwork is completed or their paperwork will be mailed to them.

Vulnerable Populations

1. Individuals who are over age 65 and individuals with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, liver disease, chronic kidney disease requiring dialysis, chronic lung disease, diabetes, severe obesity, asthma, blood disorders, 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 court's website and in the court building (a copy of which is attached).
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by allowing continuances or extensions if this population reports an inability to appear due to health or concern about becoming infected.

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'. Appropriate markings have been made on the floor so individuals will be reminded to stay 6' apart.
2. The restroom has been closed to the public.
3. Public common areas have been closed to the public.

Gallery

4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of the courtroom has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff or bailiff.

5. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row and 6' apart.

Well

6. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, clerk, and bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space. In addition, a plexiglass shield has been installed at the judge's bench.

Hygiene

1. A hand sanitizer dispenser has been placed in the lobby of the building and all who enter the court building are encouraged to use the hand sanitizer.
2. Tissues have been placed in the courtroom, at counsel tables, and on the judge's bench.
3. The Department of State Health Service's *"Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer"* has been posted in the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the court clerk or 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, or have traveled within the past 2 weeks (domestic or abroad) to areas with endemic COVID-19. If an individual has been quarantined, they would not be admitted to the court building. 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 court clerk or bailiff will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals with a temperature equal or more than 100.0°F will be refused admittance to the court building.
3. Staff who screen individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment (including a face mask, and gloves) and are encouraged to use PPE.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times, if they do not have one the court will not provide them with one, they will then be directed to handle their business through the drive through.

Cleaning

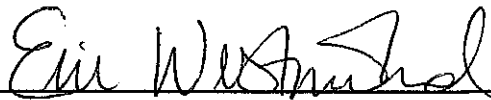
1. Court staff will clean the common areas of the court building daily.
2. Court staff will wipe down the courtroom between every hearing, between morning and afternoon proceedings, and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
3. Court staff has been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with fighting the coronavirus.

4. Court building cleaning staff have been instructed on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

Other – Every effort consistent with the resources of this court is being made to protect the court staff and the general public’s health during this pandemic. The procedures outlined in this plan will be continuously reviewed to remain pertinent to the demands presented by COVID-19.

The City of Lockhart has two judges using the municipal court building and both judges concur in the development of this Operating Plan. Further, the plan has been coordinated with the local public health authority and mayor as indicated by the attached documentation. I will ensure that the judges of this court conduct proceedings consistent with this Operating Plan.

Date: 7/9/2020



Erin Westmoreland, Associate Judge,
(Acting Presiding Judge, pending action from City Council)
City of Lockhart
Caldwell County, Texas

Endorsement:

I have reviewed this operating plan for the Lockhart Municipal Court and approve as written.

Charles E. Laurence, M.D.
Public Health Authority
City of Lockhart
Caldwell County, Texas



Lew White
Mayor
City of Lockhart

CITY OF
Lockhart
MUNICIPAL COURT

June 1, 2020

Please inform the court via phone number, 512-398-8330, or email, court@lockhart-tx.org, if you are a **Vulnerable Individual**:

- Over 65 years of age.
- Have serious underlying health conditions such as
 - HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE
 - HEART DISEASE
 - LIVER DISEASE
 - CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE REQUIRING DIALYSIS
 - CHRONIC LUNG DISEASE
 - DIABETES
 - SEVERE OBESITY
 - ASTHMA
 - HEMOGLOBIN (BLOOD) DISORDERS
 - COMPROMISED IMMUNE SYSTEM