

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

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 City of Lufkin Municipal Court 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 City of Lufkin Municipal Court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and the mayor, and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the City of Lufkin.
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. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: all staff will be screened daily.
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 at all time.
5. Protective Measures: the court staff are separated from the public by windows with a slot at the bottom. Staff are provided with hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes for work stations, gloves, and masks.

### **Scheduling**

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
2. Each docket will consist of no more than ten (10) defendants;
3. In between each hearing, thirty (30) minutes will be allowed to properly clean and sanitize.
4. Virtual hearings will continue several times per week;
5. Those defendants with limited access to a smart phone or reliable internet will be able to have a Zoom hearing (via court mounted Ipad) in the vestibule of the courthouse.
6. Options are available to handle cases by phone, email, mail, and zoom are being encouraged to reduce any in-person dealings.

### **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' website and in conspicuous locations around the court building: "COVID19 NOTICE- Please contact the court or make other arrangements for a hearing if you are over age 65 or have serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune system are compromised such by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy."
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by scheduling a phone conference with the Judge, prosecutor, and clerk.

### **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. Only defendants handling their cases will be allowed inside the building, with the exception of juveniles and those with mental and/or physical disabilities. Defendants necessitating an additional person are only permitted to have one (1) person accompany them.
3. 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.
4. There are no public common areas in our courthouse.
5. Signs and floor stickers have been placed to encourage social distancing while waiting in the lobby and/or service window.

### *Gallery*

6. 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. At no time will the courtroom exceed 25% of normal courtroom capacity.
7. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

### *Well*

8. 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 will be placed at the entrance to the building and outside of the courtroom.

2. Tissues have been placed at counsel tables, at the witness stand, at the judges' bench, and at each clerks work station.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in the vestibule of the courthouse.
4. Signs regarding proper hand washing has been placed in each restroom.

### Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the City Marshal or a court staff member 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, a court staff member will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 99.6 °F will be refused admittance to the court building.
3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including gloves and face masks.
4. Inmates are not transported from the jail to the courthouse.

### Face Coverings

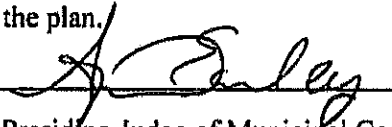
1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided.
3. Individuals who will be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

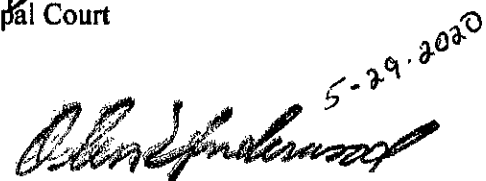
### Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff and/or court staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every three (3) hours.
2. Court building cleaning staff and/or court staff will clean the courtrooms between every hearing, between morning and afternoon proceedings, and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
3. Court building cleaning staff and/or court staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
4. Court building cleaning staff and/or court staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques, and provided with appropriate personal protective equipment.

I am the only Judge and there is only one (1) courtroom in the building. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority and mayor for the City of Lufkin, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the Judge with a courtroom in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/11/2020

  
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Presiding Judge of Municipal Court

  
5-29-2020