

# **COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Princeton Judiciary**

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 court of **City of Princeton** 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 mayor and 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 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:
  - A. Each municipal court employee, judge, and other person entering court facilities to conduct scheduled court business shall be required to complete the Employee Health Monitoring questionnaire upon entry. Court facilities include the clerks' office and the courtroom.
  - B. It is recommended that employees, judges, and any other persons entering court facilities to conduct scheduled court business have their temperature taken upon initial arrival at court facilities. Court facilities include the clerks' office and the courtroom. (Refer to Item #3 below.)
  - C. Infrared thermometers shall be used for employee screenings. Screeners may confirm readings with thermometers with probe covers, if needed.
  - D. The Bailiff shall ensure that if someone is screened, the results are documented. If a staff member has a positive screening, the Court Administrator and Presiding Judge shall be notified.
3. Judges, court staff, or any other person performing their job function at court facilities who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.00°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 court facilities and should seek medical advice.

4. Judges, court staff, and any other person performing their job function within municipal court facilities should wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times.
5. Protective Measures: Court staff should wear masks and gloves when interacting with the public. Court staff must use hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) immediately after each interaction with any member of the public. Court staff must also use hand sanitizer after handling each piece of mail.

### **Scheduling**

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: No more than twenty (20) court users (staff, defendants, witnesses, members of the public) will be allowed in the gallery of the courtroom at one time. Court users will be stopped at the door by the bailiff and if the maximum user level is already reached then they will take the defendant's phone number. Once space is available, court staff will contact the court user via phone and direct them to enter the building. If a court user does not have a phone, that person should check-in at the court window, and that person will be provided a place to wait to be called into the courtroom that is a distance of at least six feet from all other persons. If more than ten (10) employees and/or contractors are present at one time, consider having an individual wholly or partially dedicated to ensuring the health protocols adopted by the employer are being successfully implemented and followed. (See DSHS protocol for all Employers)

### **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' websites 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 having their court date rescheduled or having their case heard through remote capabilities.

### **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 between individuals.
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.
3. Public common areas, including break rooms and snack rooms, have been closed to the public.

### *Gallery*

4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
5. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row. A maximum of twenty (20) persons will be allowed in the seating area of the gallery. If there are ever more than 10 persons present at one time, the Bailiff will ensure the health protocols adopted are being successfully being implemented and followed.

### *Well*

6. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and 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.

### **Hygiene**

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building, outside of the courtroom, and outside of bathrooms.
2. Tissues have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, on the judges' benches, and in the hallways.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations on each floor of the court building.

### **Screening**

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, temperature checks and symptom screenings will be taken. A screening questionnaire will inquire if the person has experienced: 1) cough 2) feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit 3) shortness of breath 4) repeated shaking with chills 5) headaches 6) sore throat 7) new loss of taste or smell 8) diarrhea 9) muscle pain 10) chills 11) known close contact with a person who is lab 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 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 masks and gloves.

### **Face Coverings**

1. As facemasks are recommended by the CDC, it is recommended that all individuals entering the courtroom wear face coverings at all times. Disposable masks will be made available.

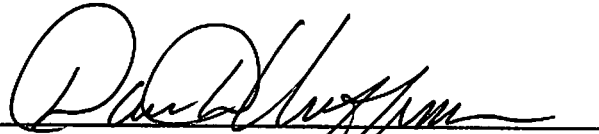
- a. A designated receptacle will be provided at exits to collect used facemasks.

**Cleaning**

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every four hours during business 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.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies that are EPA grade. A list of EPA approved cleaning supplies for COVID-19 can be found on the CDC website.
4. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

I have attempted to confer with all judges of the City of Princeton Municipal Court regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority and/or mayor, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the judges of the City of Princeton Municipal Court conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/29/2020



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court