

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Richland Hills, Tarrant County

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, the judge, and other individuals entering the building housing the court, the court of **City of Richland Hills** 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 maintain regular communication with the local health authority and the City Manager to adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
3. The Judge will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 4, 2020

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judge and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: daily temperature monitoring, COVID screening questions and self-monitoring and reporting.
3. Judge 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. Judge and court staff will wear face coverings when required, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations.
5. Protective Measures: Protective window for clerks and sneeze guards at face-to-face transactions stations. Protective gloves, facial masks worn by Judge and Marshal, and facial coverings used by all other staff when required. Frequent hand washing/sanitizing, and routine deep sanitizing of our facility. Front lobby has been marked with signage and floor stickers for social distancing requirements. Disposable masks, hand sanitizer and wipes available for all visitors in the lobby and courtroom entrance. Any pen used for transactions will be sanitized and/or disposed of. Multiple options to limit the number of in-person transactions are available such as, email or fax requests and phone calls.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
The majority of processing cases can be handled by mail, email, online or a drop box located behind the court building. Notices and fillable request forms will be available for payment plans, driver safety, deferred disposition, and continuances on our website. Upon reaching capacity in the courtroom, defendants will be directed to return to their vehicle to await instructions. Once we are able to reduce our capacity defendants will be contacted to return to the courtroom to proceed with their

case. Defendants will be limited to one guest to accompany them and at this time, guests under the age of 16 will not be allowed in the courtroom. To reduce physical contact during security screening, all who enter the courtroom will be asked to minimize and/or refrain from bringing in personal belongings such as purses and backpacks. Accommodations will be made to comply with the Open Courts provision, but at no time will the courtroom capacity exceed social distancing requirements.

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. The Judge will include information on orders setting hearings, docket 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.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by mail, email or fax where possible, individuals hearing when necessary.

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 a minimum of 6 feet.
2. Restrooms in the court building are single occupancy only.

Gallery

3. 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.
4. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating.

Well

5. In the courtroom, the witness stand, judge's bench, clerk, court reporter, and bailiff areas 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 will be placed at the entrance to the building, courtroom and bathroom areas.
2. Tissues have been placed in various locations throughout the courtroom.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations of the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the assigned staff 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. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including protective facial masks and gloves.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the secured court area 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 multiple times throughout the day.
2. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

Other

The court will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and adjust accordingly with the advisement of local health authorities and State mandates.

In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority and the City Manager and documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the courtroom in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 6/1/2020



Judge, J. Stewart Bass

6/1/20

Date