

# COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Municipal City Court of Richwood, Brazoria County, Texas

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 courts of **Richwood** 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 June 1, 2020

## Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: On a daily basis as listed below.
2. 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.
3. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings and/or practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations during hearings.
4. Protective Measures: Judges and court staff shall wash hands and disinfect the area after each transaction with face to face interaction at the window or in the courtroom.

## Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: A limited number of defendants and parties will be allowed in the lobby or courtroom with consideration for social distancing at six feet minimum distance between each participant. No seating will be provided during arraignment dockets except for the Judge and staff and shall be disinfected at the end of the court session.

## **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 in conspicuous locations around the court building.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by any reasonable accommodations including special court settings and/or video conferencing.

## **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. Public common areas, including break rooms and snack rooms, have are closed to the public.

### *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 and bailiff.

### *Well*

4. In the courtroom, during trials, 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 have been placed in the lobby.
2. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted.

## **Screening**

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court courtroom, the 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. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions will be refused admittance to the court building.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the courtroom, the bailiff will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.0°F will be refused admittance to the court building for a minimum of 14 days.

3. Staff and bailiffs who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including face coverings, gloves, and hand sanitizer.

#### Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the courtroom will be encouraged to wear face coverings at all times.

#### Cleaning

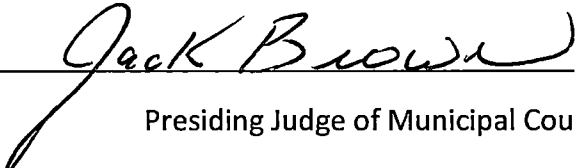
1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned appropriately.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms between every session and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
4. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

#### Other

In the event this Operating Plan is unworkable or becomes unnecessary for any reason the Presiding Judge reserves the right to amend this Operating Plan and will notify the mayor, court staff, and bailiffs prior to any court proceeding or within 24 hours whichever is the shortest time period.

I have attempted to confer with all judges of courts regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority and mayor. I will ensure that the judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/19/2020

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Presiding Judge of Municipal Court