

COVID-19 Operating Plan for The Colony Municipal Court

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the building housing the court, the court of The Colony 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 will maintain regular communication with the local health authority, the City Manager and the Mayor and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city and Denton County.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 29, 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: Judge and Court Staff shall self-monitor body temperature and signs or symptoms of COVID-19 before reporting to work. If a judge or staff member feels ill, or has any symptoms of COVID-19, he or she shall remain at home. There is a temperature station at the employee entrance at 5151 North Colony Boulevard, The Colony, Texas.
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 are encouraged to wear face coverings where social distancing cannot be achieved, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations by Denton County Public Health Department at all time.

5. **Protective Measures:** The Court shall utilize, to the extent possible, the following protective measures for the staff and public; wearing face coverings, frequent handwashing or sanitizing, social distancing, frequent cleaning and sanitizing of public areas, removing of chairs in lobby to prevent gathering, hand sanitizers at each clerk window, encouraging individuals to utilize our online services.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
 - Virtual court hearings will be made available for essential and non-essential hearings;
 - Court Administrator shall stagger the number of cases scheduled for in person hearings to limit the number of individuals in the courtroom based on the 6ft social distancing requirements;
 - Attorneys that will be scheduled for hearings will have the option to utilize the Zoom portal that is being offered through the Office of Court Administration, currently in the process of setting this option up;
 - Jury Trials are currently on hold until further notice
 - In-person court hearings will also be held in the evenings twice a month to allow flexible schedules for individuals that are requesting to speak with the judge.

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 rescheduling the matter or allowing remote access, as applicable.

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. 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 breakrooms and snack rooms, have been closed to the public.

4. Signage will be placed around the court/lobby/courtroom.
5. Chairs in the courtroom and lobby will be reduced to allow for social distancing.
6. Individuals will be assisted at the window- one at a time, to prevent crowding; Individuals in the courtroom will be able to handle all transactions, including financial, in the courtroom.

Gallery

7. The capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
8. Seating is limited to every other row.

Well

9. In each courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk, 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, outside of the courtroom, at the clerk window, inside the courtroom at the counsel tables, when necessary, and at the clerk station in the courtroom.
2. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations in the lobby of the building.

Screening

1. Signs will be posted at the entrance of the building stating: "If you have a fever, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or have been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19, DO NOT ENTER the building." Signs will be in English and Spanish.

Face Coverings

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

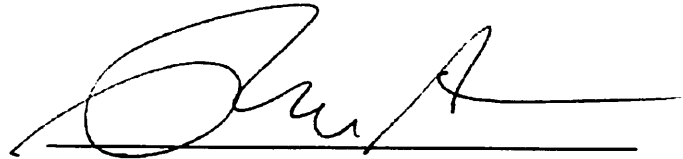
Cleaning

1. Building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least two times per day.
2. Building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms between morning and afternoon proceedings, and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.

3. Building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
4. Building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority and Mayor, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that The Colony Municipal Court covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 6/22/2020

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Anderson', written over a horizontal line.

Presiding Judge, The Colony Municipal Court
Richard Anderson