

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Vidor Judiciary

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the building housing the City of Vidor 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, as amended.
2. The Municipal Court will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings in-person safely.
3. The presiding judge of the municipal court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority, county judge and mayor and adjust this operating plan, as necessary, with conditions in the city.
4. The Municipal Court will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 2, 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: Follow the Minimum Standard COVID-19 Health Protocols from the Texas Department of State Health Services for Employers, Employees, and facilities. In addition, staff will be instructed to notify the Judge and other staff members within their court (by either calling the presiding Judge, sending a group text message to the presiding judge and staff, or emailing the presiding Judge and staff) if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or has exhibited symptoms before reporting to work in the court.
3. Judge or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.0°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. In the court room, the Judge and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: Follow the Minimum Standard COVID-19 Health Protocols from the Texas Department of State Health Services for Employers, Employees, and facilities.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
 - a. Court dockets will be reduced in size and scheduled appropriately to comply with social distancing and courtroom occupancy requirements.
 - b. All hearings must be scheduled in advance.
 - c. No family members or visitors accompany any party scheduled for hearing unless disabled.
 - d. All litigants seeking the court's services should schedule an appointment whenever possible.

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 the option to participate remotely and should contact the court directly.

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 snackrooms, 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.

Well

6. 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 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.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the courtroom, one entrance will be used and all individuals will be asked 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 room.
2. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including but not limited to face coverings and hand sanitizer.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court room 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 room and lobby cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court room and lobby at least once a day.
2. Court room and lobby cleaning staff will clean the courtroom between every hearing, between morning and afternoon proceedings, and at the end of each day the court room is used.
3. Court room and lobby cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
4. Court room and lobby cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

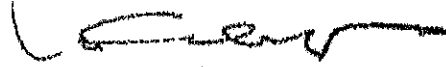
Other

While under a Disaster Declaration, Emergency Management will issue masks and wipes for courthouse personnel.

Vidor Municipal Court will follow the Guidance for All Court Proceedings During COVID-19 Pandemic for proceedings on or after June 1, 2020 prepared by the Office of Court Administration.

I have attempted to confer with judge of court with a courtroom in the court building regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority and county judge, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the judge of court with a courtroom in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 6/3/2020



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court

Michael C. Abbott



6/4/2020