

# **COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Winnsboro Municipal Court**

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the building, the court will implement the following protective measures:

## **General**

1. The Court 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 Court will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely while the county is under a Disaster Declaration.
3. The Court will open for limited public access on May 20, 2020.
4. The Court will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than July 16, 2020

## **Judge and Court Staff Health**

1. The Judge and Court Staff shall check their temperatures prior to entering the building.
2. The 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.
3. The Judge and Court Staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.

## **Lobby Access/Window Service**

1. The Court will open the lobby area for limited access starting May 20, 2020.
2. Due to the size and layout of the lobby area, no more than 2 people will be allowed in the lobby at one time. This includes City Hall customers.
3. Signage will be provided both outside and upon entering the building, advising that no one will be allowed to enter or stay in the building that exhibits any symptoms of COVID-19 and social distancing guidelines are mandatory.

## **Court Scheduling**

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: each hearing will consist of no more than ten defendants. In between each hearing proper sanitation will be allowed. Defendants will not be allowed to bring other guests with to a hearing. Juvenile defendants shall only be accompanied by one parent/guardian and no other guests including siblings.

## 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 Court will provide 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 city website and in conspicuous locations around the court building.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by.
  - a. Vulnerable individuals making a plea, filling documents, or making payments may do so by mail, drop box, or online.
  - b. Vulnerable individuals who are required to appear for a hearing or trial, may request the court to allow them to appear remotely, either by telephone or Zoom. Requests will be granted unless it can be shown the persons' physical presence is required.

## 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. The restrooms available to the public are marked men and women. Each restroom has two stalls. They are located in the lobby shared with the Police department and City Hall. Currently the restrooms are closed to the public until further notice.

### *Gallery*

3. 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.
4. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

### *Well*

5. In each courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, 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.
2. Tissues have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, on the judges' bench, 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, Court 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. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, Court Staff 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.
3. Court Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including masks and gloves.

### **Face Coverings**

1. All individuals entering the court building 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. Due to the design of the building and the low amount of lobby traffic, court staff will disinfect the lobby area and door every two hours.
2. Court Staff will clean the courtroom area between every hearing/trial, between morning and afternoon proceedings, and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
3. Court Staff has been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
4. Court Staff has been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

Date: 5/27/2020

  
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Presiding Judge of Municipal Court