



COVID-19 Operating Plan for the City of Nassau Bay Municipal Court

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, presiding judge, and other individuals entering the building housing the court, Nassau Bay Municipal Court of Harris County, Texas will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. The Municipal Court will comply with the Emergency Orders issued by the Supreme Court of Texas and Texas 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 Municipal Court will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. The presiding judge of the municipal court will communicate with the local health authority and the mayor to 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 February 1, 2021.

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. The Municipal Court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible.
2. The Municipal Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: If a judge or staff member does test positive for COVID-19, the judge will notify the other court staff in close contact and any other courts/departments sharing space that an individual in the court has tested positive. The judge will also notify the Office of Court Management to ensure that proper notification be made to the local health authorities so that contact tracing can be performed, and to the county facilities department so that the office space can be properly disinfected and cleaned.
3. The Municipal Court Staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.4°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 courtroom and should seek medical advice.

4. The Municipal Court Staff will be required to wear face coverings and will be required to practice social distancing (6 ft/2 m of separation) and appropriate hygiene recommendations including washing hands and sanitizing at all times. (All hand sanitizer referenced in the plan will contain minimum. 60% alcohol.)
5. Protective Measures: The City has installed sneeze guards for various points at which the judge and/or court staff may have direct face to face contact with the public.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:

The Municipal Court will review its docket and determine those cases that can be handled by submission, those cases that can be handled remotely or partially remotely, and those cases that will require in person proceedings. The court will strive to reduce the number of in person dockets and schedule those in person dockets in such a way as to maintain proper social distancing within the courtroom itself. The court will be lenient in considering requests by parties to appear through remote proceedings (e.g., via telephone or video-teleconferencing), and generous in granting requests for continuances as appropriate.

2. The Municipal Court is equipped with technology to conduct remote proceedings as possible and appropriate.
3. The Municipal Court notices, including orders setting hearings and dockets notices, will include language stating that if a party or attorney is exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms or if one believes he or she may have been exposed to COVID-19, the party or attorney is encouraged to contact the Court before appearing so that appropriate accommodations can be made.

Vulnerable Populations

1. Individuals who are 65 and older 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 Municipal Court 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 court's website.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by allowing participation by remote proceedings or through continuances as appropriate.

Social Distancing

1. All persons not from the same household who are permitted in the courtroom will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet.
2. The Municipal Court is located on the second floor of City Hall with an elevator servicing it. There has been a sign posted stating that no more than two people in the elevator at one time.
3. The City is utilizing floor markers in areas where individuals would be waiting in lines to conduct court business.

Gallery

4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the courtroom has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by the court bailiff and/or court staff.
5. The courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.

Well

6. In the courtroom, the counsel table, witness stand, juror seating, judge's bench, and clerk and bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way to maintain social distancing as best as possible.

Hygiene

7. The City has an industrial sized bottles of hand sanitizer placed on a table near the elevator and outside the courtroom.
8. Tissues have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel table, at the witness stand, on the judge bench, and in the hallways where possible. Waste bins have been placed in these areas to ensure proper disposal of tissues immediately after use.
9. Signage related to proper hygiene practices has been placed throughout the court area and the City Hall frequently visited area, including the restrooms.

Screening

1. When at all possible when individuals attempt to enter the courtroom, the 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 courtroom.
2. When at all possible 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 100.4°F will be refused admittance to the courtroom.
3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including hand sanitizer, mask, gloves, face protection, disinfectant, and any other equipment deemed necessary or appropriate for the safety of the staff member and the defendant.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the courtroom will be required to wear face coverings at all times, and the court reserves the right to turn away an individual who declines to wear a mask if so requested and provided.
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 may be provided, so long as a supply is available.

Cleaning & Disinfecting

1. The City of Nassau Bay cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the courtroom so that common spaces are cleaned regularly.
2. Courtroom cleaning staff will clean the courtroom as often as possible after each docket.
3. Courtroom cleaning staff have been provided EPA-registered disinfectants shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
4. Courtroom cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.
5. To the extent EPA-registered disinfectants are available, Court cleaning staff will use EPA-registered products that have an approved emerging viral pathogen claim for COVID-19. These products should be used according to label instructions, court staff will disinfect frequently touched surfaces (counter) at the clerk's window as often as possible.

Other

The Municipal Court have increased the ability of defendants in criminal cases to resolve their cases through the courts website (www.nassaubay.com/112/Municipal-Court) by signing up for driving safety courses, entering pleas of guilty or no contest, paying court fines and fees, making partial payments on judgments, and paying costs due on deferred dispositions, all in an effort to reduce the flow of traffic into the courtroom and the clerks' window. The court is investigating additional uses for the website to further reduce the need for a physical trip to the courthouse. The court is also actively encouraging litigants in criminal cases, to file documents electronically through submission to the court via email or fax.

In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority and the mayor, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that Nassau Bay Municipal Court conduct proceedings consistent with this plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Holly Miller", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Date: 1/8/2021

Presiding Judge of Nassau Bay Municipal Court