

# COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Dawson, Gaines, Garza, and Lynn

## Judiciaries

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, **Dawson, Gaines, Garza, and Lynn Counties** 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  will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and  of each county and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the .
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 15, 2020. If a Judge determines that a hearing cannot be held remotely, and that an in-person hearing is required, the Judge shall state in the notice of hearing the reason that the hearing could not be held remotely.

### Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Each Judge will make decisions regarding his/her staff, within the guidelines set out in this plan. Judges are encouraged to assess what court staff can perform the essential functions of their job remotely and allow said staff to telework when possible.
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. Any Judge or court staff who experiences any of the COVID-19 symptoms listed above while at work should leave work immediately and seek medical advice.
4. Each Judge shall make decisions regarding whether or not that Judge and his/her court staff will be required to wear face coverings. All Judges and court staff will be required to practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times.
5. Each Judge shall control his/her courtroom and will be permitted to enact and enforce protective policies in the courtroom, so long as those policies meet the minimum standards set out in this Operating Plan.

6. Each County Judge shall be permitted to enact and enforce protective policies in their county courthouse, so long as those policies meet the minimum standards set out in this Operating Plan.

### **Scheduling**

1. When setting in-person proceedings in compliance with the guidelines stated in this Operating Plan, each Judge is encouraged to coordinate with the other Judges who hold court in the same court building, including associate judges, to reduce occupancy in the court building.

### **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 shall 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 making all reasonable attempts to schedule remote hearings, rescheduling in-person hearings to a later date, or other accommodations deemed appropriate by the Judge presiding over the case involving the vulnerable individual.

### **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. No more than two individuals not from the same household will be permitted in an elevator. If more than one individual from the same household is in an elevator, no other individuals will be permitted in the elevator. Exceptions may be made for qualified individuals under the Americans with Disabilities Act requiring assistance.
3. Social distancing of at least 6 feet will be required in all public common areas.

### ***Gallery***

4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom shall be determined by the Judge of that court. Social distancing of at least 6 feet will be required at all times in the gallery of each courtroom. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.

## *Well*

5. In each courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk, court reporter, and bailiff seating will be arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.
6. Each Judge will determine whether or not to require the use of face coverings or face masks in his/her courtroom. Face coverings or face masks will be provided by the County. The County will also make available in every courtroom hand sanitizer, sanitizing cleaning wipes, and other hygiene products.

## **Hygiene**

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building and at several other locations throughout the court building, both inside and outside the courtroom.
2. Tissues have been placed in various locations both inside and outside the courtroom.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations throughout the court buildings.

## **Screening**

1. All public entrances to county court buildings shall contain signs regarding any individuals attempting to enter the building who are exhibiting any of the symptoms associated with COVID-19 or have been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19. The signs shall state that any Individuals who are experiencing any of these symptoms are prohibited from entering the court building.
2. Inmates being transported from the jail to the court building will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and have their temperature taken prior to transport. Inmates with symptoms or a temperature equal to or above 99.6°F will not be transported to the court building.

## **Face Coverings**

1. All individuals from the public entering the court building will be encouraged 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.

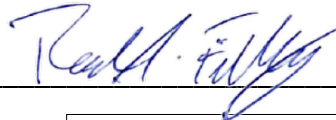
## **Cleaning**

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every 4 hours.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms between morning and afternoon proceedings, 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.

5. Cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus shall be available for use by all courtroom participants.

I have attempted to confer with all judges of courts with courtrooms in the county court buildings regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority of each county in the 106<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, as well as the county judge of each county in the 106<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the judges of courts with courtrooms in the county court buildings covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/22/2020



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# COVID-19 NOTICE

All individuals exhibiting ANY of the following symptoms are prohibited from entering any county court building:

- Fever (equal to or above 99.6°F)
- Cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Sore throat
- Loss of taste or smell

OR

- Have been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19

If you are scheduled for Court, but prohibited from entering the county court building due to any of the reasons above, please call the appropriate Court immediately.

District Court: (806) 872-3740

County Court:

# Vulnerable Populations

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.

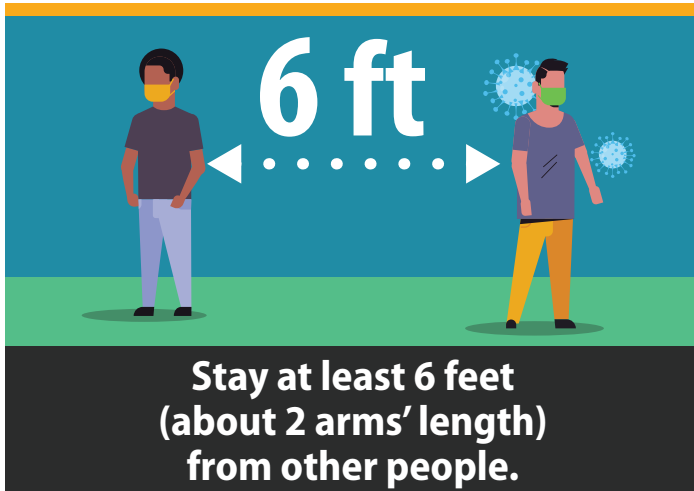
Please contact the appropriate Court to receive COVID-19 related accommodations.

District Court: (806) 872-3740

County Court:

# Stop the Spread of Germs

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)