

# COVID-19 Operating Plan for the El Lago Municipal Court City Judiciary

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, the courts of **the City of El Lago** 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 of the municipal court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and mayor and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the city.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 2, 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: Daily temperature checks, daily symptom check.
3. Judges or 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 building and should seek medical advice.
4. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings when in contact with the public without a non-permeable barrier (ie. Bullet proof glass) in between the Court staff and the public. Judges and court staff will also practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times.
5. Protective Measures: Daily temperature checks, daily symptom checks, requirement of masks by all court participants and observers, social distancing with guidance markers for keeping 6 feet between people, availability of hand sanitizer at Court proceedings, limiting the number of people in the Court and lobby areas.

## Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Normal Court Dockets will be broken up into multiple dockets held on assigned days at 30 to 60 minute intervals to limit the number of defendants in the facilities at any one time.

## **Vulnerable Populations**

1. Individuals who are 65 or older 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 (Exhibit A).
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by being allowed to reset or handle their matter via email, telephone and possibly a virtual appearances.

## **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 as indicated by markings.
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.
3. 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.
4. Public common areas, including breakrooms and snackrooms, have been closed to the public.
5. Social Distancing Signage will be used to ensure social distancing standards. (Exhibit D)

### *Gallery*

6. 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.
7. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row with unusable seating marked.

### *Well*

8. 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 elevators on each floor, outside of each 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 and waste bins are provided for the disposal of tissues.
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 and signage for the proper washing of hands has been posted in the restrooms. (Exhibit B)

### **Screening**

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, bailiffs and/or 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. Signage will be placed at the entrance to the court building stating that if a person does not feel well they should not enter (Exhibit C)
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, bailiffs and/or Court staff will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 99.6°F will be refused admittance to the court building.
3. 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.
4. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including face coverings, hand sanitizer, gloves.

### **Face Coverings**

1. All individuals 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 if available.
3. Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for over 1 hour will be provided surgical masks and required to wear them while in the court building if the supply is available.

### **Cleaning and Disinfecting**

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean and disinfect the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every 24 hours.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms between every docket, between morning and afternoon proceedings, and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been provided with EPA approved disinfectants 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. Frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, light switches and counters will be cleaned and disinfected more frequently.

**Other**

Court staff will attempt to contact all defendants scheduled for an appearance prior to their appearance date through email or phone (if such information is available) to inform them of the requirements of the temperature check, symptom check and face covering requirement and attempt alternative means of handling the case other than an in person court appearance.

I have attempted to confer with all judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority (Exhibit F) and mayor, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that the judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: 5/27/2020

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert J. Barnfield  
Presiding Judge of Municipal Court  
El Lago  
Harris County Texas



  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Thomas Merchant  
Emergency Management Coordinator  
El Lago, Texas

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John Skelton  
Mayor  
El Lago Texas





El Lago

Municipal Court

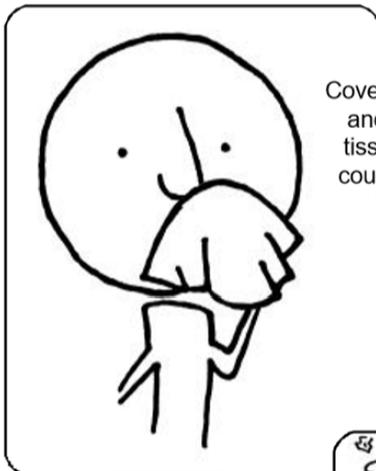
Individuals who are 65 or older and individuals with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy are considered to be vulnerable populations.

If you are an individual who is considered part of the vulnerable population you can identify yourself to the Court and receive accommodations.

(Exhibit A)

Stop the spread of germs that make you and others sick!

# Cover your Cough



Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze

or cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.



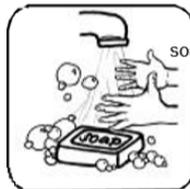
Put your used tissue in the waste basket.



You may be asked to put on a surgical mask to protect others.

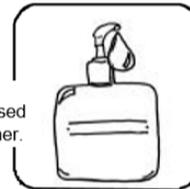
## Clean your Hands

after coughing or sneezing.



Wash with soap and water

or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner.



Minnesota Department of Health  
717 SE Delaware Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
612-676-5414 or 1-877-676-5414  
www.health.state.mn.us



Minnesota  
Antibiotic  
Resistance  
Collaborative



ASSOCIATION FOR PROFESSIONALS IN INFECTION CONTROL AND EPIDEMIOLOGY

102141-1428



**PLEASE RETURN HOME IF YOU HAVE ANY  
COVID-19 RELATED SYMPTOMS**



**COUGH**



**RUNNY  
NOSE**



**FEVER**



**SORE  
THROAT**



**VOMITING**



**HEADACHE**

**Free COVID-19 testing is available through Harris County Public Health.  
Visit [covcheck.hctx.net](https://covcheck.hctx.net) or Call 832.927.7575**



Harris County  
**Public Health**  
Building a Healthy Community



[HCPHTX.ORG](https://HCPHTX.ORG)



11.5"

CUT LINE



BLEED

Exhibit D

**COVID**  
CORONAVIRUS  
DISEASE **19**

# CLEAN HANDS, GOOD HEALTH

## STEP 1

Use Warm Water



## STEP 2

Apply Soap



## STEP 3

Scrub for at least 20 seconds.  
(sing happy B-day song twice)



## STEP 4

Rinse Hands



## STEP 5

Dry with Paper  
Towels or Air Dryer



## STEP 6

Close Faucet with  
Paper Towel



Handwashing helps stop the spread of germs that cause illnesses and diseases

WET hands with warm water and apply soap

WASH hands with soap for 20 seconds

RINSE hands under warm water

DRY hands using a clean paper towel or air dry them

f t @ v FOR LATEST INFORMATION VISIT  
**WWW.HCPHTX.ORG**



Exhibit E