

## **COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Nueces County 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 court, the court of **Justice of The Peace Precinct 1 Place 3** 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 local administrative district judge will maintain regular communication with the local health authority, county judge and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the county.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 1, 2020

### **Judge and Court Staff Health**

1. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: Judge Rubio/Administrative Secretary will be observing and asking health questions of staff
2. Judge Rubio 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.
3. Judge Rubio and Court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time. Judge Rubio has a plexi-glass in front of her bench.
4. Protective Measures: Wear gloves when handling documents and assisting public, wear face mask, sanitizing hands and wipe down workstations throughout day.

### **Scheduling**

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

1. Review docket and determine which can be handled remotely or in person hearings-We will strive to schedule in persons hearings in such a way as to maintain proper social distancing within courtroom itself.
2. Staggering court hearings by time and days and other court appearances to limit traffic flow at one time.
3. There will be a sign posted on the Courtroom door that reads: "That there will be no more than 10 people in the courtroom at any time."

### **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. Judge Rubio's Court 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.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by conference call, and/or Zoom, or we can also set for a later time upon notice prior to court hearing and we can call them in once everyone clears from courtroom.

### **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.

### **Gallery**

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

### **Well**

5. In the courtroom, the Plaintiff & Defendant tables, the witness stand, Judge Rubio's bench, the Court 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, outside of the courtroom, and outside of bathrooms.
2. Tissues have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at Plaintiff & Defendant tables, at the witness stand, on the Judge Rubio's 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 in the court building.

### **Screening**

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, for a Court Hearing, a Designated Court Clerk 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

TEMPLATE TO BE MODIFIED AS APPROPRIATE

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, for a Court Hearing, a Designated court clerk 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 court building. We will also keep in their case file the screening questions and their temperature reading.
3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including face shield, mask, and gloves.

**Face Coverings**

1. All individuals entering the courtroom will be required to wear face coverings at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a face covering, a disposable mask will be provided.
3. Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for over 1 hour will be provided a disposal mask and required to wear it while in the court building if supplies are available.

**Cleaning**

1. Court staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned & sanitized. One designated Court clerk will clean and sanitizer between Court proceedings and other public contact. Designated Court Clerk will be wearing face shield, mask, and gloves.
2. A designated Court Clerk will clean and sanitize table and chairs where Defendant and Plaintiff are seated in the courtroom between every hearing, 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 comes in and empties trash, wipes down door handles, wipes down light switches, cleans toilets, sweeps the floor daily and mop the floor once a week and they use protective equipment, by wearing face mask and gloves.

Date: June 08, 2020

*Judge Lucy Rubio*  
Judge Lucy Rubio, Precinct 1 Place 3

