

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Nueces County Judiciary

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judge, and other individuals entering the building housing the court, the court of **Nueces County Justice of the Peace, Precinct 2, Place 1** will implement the following protective measures: (This is an up-dated plan from that earlier submitted to Judge Hasette and Medical Director Annette Rodriguez.)

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 and 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 8, 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: Office Manager will be alert to judge's and staff's physical appearance and make inquiries as to each person's well-being with specific questions as to the presence of the known symptoms of COVID-19 and, when we have a thermometer available to us, take each staff member's temperature as they arrive at the office. No employee is to report for work if feeling ill.
3. 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.
4. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: We plan on demanding that those who come into our offices and courtroom maintain 6' social distancing; and encourage liberal use of the hand-sanitizer provided, to use the disinfecting wipes provided to sanitize anything they have touched, and to wear face coverings while in our offices and courtroom; and to respond to our questions

concerning their health and recent travel outside the city, and contact with anyone who demonstrates symptoms of COVID-19.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
We will schedule cases separately or in small blocks and allow ample time for each case or set of cases to be concluded before the parties scheduled next present themselves for their case. Our office does have a rather large lobby with chairs and ample space for persons waiting to go into the courtroom to maintain social distancing.

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 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 (a copy of which is attached).
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by setting the hearing at a time when the vulnerable person and the opposing party are the only persons, besides the Court, present in the courtroom (which is quite large), or having a hybrid hearing with the vulnerable person calling in and using the Court's speaker phone; or asking the vulnerable person what would make them feel comfortable and doing everything possible to accommodate them.

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. Note: this court building does not have an 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 snack rooms, have been closed to the public.

Gallery

5. 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.

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

Well

7. In the 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 will be placed at the entrance to the building, on the outside of the 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.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted at several locations in the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the Bailiff, when there are court settings, and at other times a staff member, 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, the Bailiff, when there are court settings, 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. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including the PPE which is provided by the Constable's office for this purpose.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times. However, if there is a special concern as to an individual which has been expressed to the judge or a staff member, this policy can be amended or adjusted to accommodate an individual's specific condition or circumstance.
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.
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

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that all common areas are cleaned at least three times a week.
2. Court clerks will clean 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 and court clerks 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.

Other - Updated

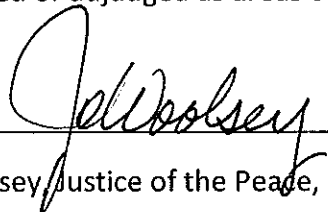
Inasmuch as we only have court building cleaning staff three times a week for one to two hours each day, the court clerks are wiping down with sanitizer every surface known to have been touched (or that might have been touched) by someone coming into our lobby; and at the end of the day the clerks are wiping down all surfaces in the lobby, except the walls and floors. When we start using the courtroom, it is our plan to ask those in attendance to use the sanitizing wipes provided to wipe down anything they touch, i.e., chairs, table, and doors as they are leaving. We have two restrooms (one male and one female), and they are infrequently used; however, those areas are also wiped down at the end of each day, and if it is known they were used, they are sprayed with sanitizer after the person leaves the building. Before the supplies ordered through the County were delivered, we were using what we had personally purchased to do the sanitizing. As of today, we have not received the ordered no-contact hand sanitizers, but have received the other supplies.

Also, it should be noted that as of today we have received an Ipad that can be utilized for Zoom hearings if a pro se party, or anyone, does not have a computer or internet, or a cell phone capable of being utilized for Zoom. Also, we have now been provided with a new credit card machine since the one we had had not worked for months.

It should be noted that our office and courtroom are not shared with any other office or court. Basically, we are a free-standing office.

This is our proposed Operating Plan as of today, June 5, 2020. It is intended that this plan and its policies are flexible and will or may be changed or adjudged as areas of concern are identified.

Date: 6/5/2020



Jo Woolsey, Justice of the Peace, Precinct 2, Place 1,
Nueces County, Texas

Do you have any of the following:

1. Are you running a fever or feel feverish?
2. A cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing?
3. Chills, shaking with chills?
4. Muscle pain or headache?
5. Sore throat; loss of taste or smell?
6. Diarrhea?

Have you traveled outside the City recently or been in contact with anyone who has been outside this country; or been in contact with a person confirmed to have COVID-19?

If so, you need to leave the building and we will do business with you over the telephone or by mail. (361) 853-4079.

Notice to Vulnerable Individuals

If you are an individual over the age of 65, or have a serious underlying health condition such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, or a compromised immune system caused by chemotherapy or any other cause, you are considered to be a member of a vulnerable population and we request that you call our office at (361) 853-4079 to discuss with us what we may do to accommodate you in order that your health is not jeopardized as a result of the referenced hearing.