

COVID-19 Operating Plan

for the Municipal Court of Record in Granite Shoals, Texas

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 Municipal Court of Record in the City of Granite Shoals 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 20, 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. Glass windows exist to separate the public from court staff.
3. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: The court will obtain an infrared thermometer to check temperatures of the judge and court staff, which will be checked daily for those who are in city hall.
4. 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.
5. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings whenever they are in direct contact with the public or others (face coverings will not be required when judges or court staff are working alone in their offices), and shall practice social distancing and appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times.
6. Masks, disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer will be provided to staff and judges.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: Cases shall be conducted remotely to the fullest extent possible. In-person cases shall be scheduled no closer than 15 minutes apart and shall be 30 minutes apart if possible.

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 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 allowing them to appear by electronic means.

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 the elevator. If more than one individual from the same household is in the 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.

Gallery

5. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of the courtroom has been determined to be 8 persons and will be posted prior to any hearing. 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, 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 elevator on each floor, outside of each courtroom, on each side of the clerk's window, and inside 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 in multiple locations on each floor of the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the bailiff or city 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.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court building beyond the clerk's window, the bailiff or one of the court clerks 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. 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 100.0°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 masks and gloves.

Face Coverings

1. All members of the public entering the court building 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, the city will provide a single-use disposable face mask.
3. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings whenever they are in direct contact with the public or others (face coverings will not be required when judges or city staff are working alone in their offices).

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every week, but areas such as counters, tables, chairs, door handles to which the public has access shall be cleaned at least every 24 hours.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms between every proceeding and at the end of each day the courtroom is used. For purposes of this Plan the term "courtroom" includes a room in which a defendant may be placed for electronic hearings. If a defendant or

the public uses a computer terminal or other electronic equipment, the equipment shall be cleaned between use by different people.

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.

Other

When people sign in for court proceedings, every person shall receive a new pencil, or alternatively, a pen or pencil that has been sanitized by court staff between each use. Further, clip boards used for sign-in shall be sanitized between each use.

The city will provide a computer monitor equipped with a camera and microphone in a separate room in City Hall for a defendant to use for remote proceedings if a defendant is does not have access to equipment that will allow the defendant to appear remotely.

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

Date: June 4, 2020



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court

Date:

Presiding Regional Administrative Judge

MUNICIPAL COURT OF RECORD IN THE CITY OF GRANITE SHOALS

NOTICE TO VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

The following notice shall be posted on the Court's website, at the entrance to City Hall. and at the Court Clerk's window, and in all orders setting hearings, dockets notices, and other communications:

Notice to Vulnerable Populations

The following are considered to be member of 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.

Any person who is in a Vulnerable Population category may to contact the court to identify themselves as a vulnerable individual and receive accommodations, which will include the ability to participate in electronic or telephonic proceedings. If you do not have the technology to appear electronically or by telephone, the Court will make accommodations for you at City Hall that will include the ability to so participate using equipment that will be sanitized between users. If you appear in person at City Hall, you will be required to wear a protective mask and one will be provided to you if you do not have one. Contact the court by email at court@graniteshoals.org or call us at 830-598-2424 for more information or to ask for an accommodation.