



COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Jersey Village Municipal Court

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, defendants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the building housing the court to conduct court business, the **Jersey Village Municipal Court** 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 communicate with the local health authority and mayor as needed 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 September 1, 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. Judges and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: Judges and court staff are responsible for self-monitoring for symptoms and are subject to daily temperature checks. Any staff member who is experiencing any symptom (as discussed below) or who is otherwise exposed to a COVID-19 positive person is required and/or expected to quarantine until the staff member receives a negative COVID-19 test result. Any judge who is experiencing any symptom or who is otherwise exposed to a COVID-19 positive person is expected to notify the Court Administrator and otherwise not physically report to the court.
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures greater than 100.4°F (or 99.6°F for those who are age 65 or older), or with new or worsening signs or symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever, 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 practice social distancing and appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times.
5. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, and staff will be provided with guidance on how to make a home-made face covering and properly wear it.
6. Judges and court staff have been provided with training materials and information related to COVID-19 symptoms, how to stop the spread of COVID-19, and screening procedures.
7. Protective Measures: Clerks working the window for walk-in business will sit behind plexiglass windows. The city is in the process of securing sneeze guards for points where judges, court staff, prosecutors, bailiff(s), and the public must have direct face-to-face contact in the courtroom.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the courtroom:
The court will review its dockets and determine those cases that can be handled by submission, those cases that can be handled remotely or partially remotely, and those cases that will require in person proceedings. Defendants will be contacted and asked if they would like to appear remotely via video- or tele-conferencing or if they would like to or need to appear in person, and the court will schedule and conduct remote dockets to accommodate those defendants. Dockets, which were previously set with 100 defendants, will be set at no more than 30 defendants to reduce the number of persons in the courtroom at any given time as a way to maintain proper social distancing within the courtroom itself. Whereas dockets were previously set only twice a day at 8:00 am and 1:00 pm, dockets will instead be scheduled at 8:00 am, 9:30 am, 11:00 am, 1:00 pm, and 2:30 pm so as to space out dockets, again reducing the number of persons in the courtroom at any given time. The court will encourage the State, defense counsel, and defendants to discuss cases remotely prior to appearing in court for possible resolution or to reduce the time needed in face-to-face communication. The court will be generous in granting requests for continuances as appropriate.
2. The court is equipped to conduct dockets remotely via Zoom.
3. Court notices, including orders setting hearings and docket notices, will include language stating that if a party or attorney is exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms or if one believes he or she may have been exposed to COVID-19, the party or attorney is encouraged to contact the court before appearing so that appropriate accommodations can be made. All notices from the court will include a statement that says or is similar to:

If you are exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms, including fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, or diarrhea, or if you believe you may have been exposed to COVID-19, you are encouraged to contact the Court before appearing. The Court may allow or require anyone involved in any proceeding to participate remotely, such as by teleconferencing or videoconferencing.

4. The Court's website will also include this language, along with a link to the Harris County Public Health website with testing location and information on mask usage.

Vulnerable Populations

1. Individuals who are age 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. Court notices, including orders setting hearings and docket notices, will notify 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 court's website.
3. Individuals who are in vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by allowing participation via remote proceedings or through continuances as appropriate.

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.
3. Public common areas accessible from the court spaces, including breakrooms, have been closed to the public.
4. The city is utilizing floor markers in areas where individuals would be waiting in lines to conduct court business and posting signage reminding the public to maintain social distancing throughout the court areas.

Gallery

5. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom has been determined and will be monitored and enforced by court staff. The maximum number has been set at no more than 25 percent of the room capacity as determined by the fire marshal.
6. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked with floor markers to identify appropriate social distancing where defendants/public would line up for check-in, and approach the bench. As there is no fixed seating in the courtroom space, chairs will be spaced in the courtroom so as to limit seating and ensure appropriate social distancing.

Well

7. In the courtroom, the counsel tables, judge's bench, clerk stations, 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 (both the clerk offices and courtroom), at the clerk's window, at the prosecutor's table, at the judge's bench, and outside of bathrooms.

2. Tissues have been placed at the entrances to the building (both the clerk offices and courtroom), at the clerk's window, at the prosecutor's table, at the judge's bench, and outside of bathrooms. Waste bins have been placed in these areas to ensure proper disposal of tissues immediately after use.
3. Signage related to proper hygiene practices has been placed throughout the court areas, including the restrooms.

Screening

1. A large sign will be placed at the door to the courtroom on court days instructing all persons attempting to enter that they will be subject to temperature screening and a questionnaire related to symptoms and exposure. Any person who is experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms or who believes he or she may have been exposed to COVID-19, will be instructed to return to their vehicle and contact the court via telephone to be reset for a remote appearance or a future court date.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the courtroom, the bailiff or another law enforcement officer 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.
3. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, the bailiff or another law enforcement officer 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.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times, and the court reserves the right to turn away an individual who declines to wear a mask if so requested. The court will include information about this on the court's website, and provide links to information on how to make a home-made face covering and properly wear one.
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, so long as a supply is available.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every day.
2. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies and EPA-registered disinfectants shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning and disinfecting techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

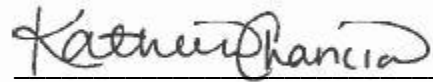
4. To the extent cleaning and disinfecting supplies are available, court staff will disinfect common surfaces in the courtroom and at the clerk's windows as often as possible, between defendants and/or dockets, to include door handles, counter space, pens, and chairs.

Other

The court has been working with the city prosecutors to encourage communication between the prosecutor and defense counsel/defendants prior to coming to court. All defendants have been granted an extension for all deadlines that were set to expire since March 13, 2020, until September 30, 2020. Show cause hearings for missed deadlines, either for payment or compliance with conditions of a deferred or driving safety course, will be set for remote hearings beginning in October.

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

Date: 8/19/2020

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Katherine Phancia", written over a horizontal line.

Presiding Judge of Municipal Court