

Emergency COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Webb County 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 **Webb County Justice Center** 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 essential 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 may adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the county.
4. Any in-person proceedings that comply with these orders may be scheduled no sooner than June 15, 2020.

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judges and Court staff may perform the essential functions of their job remotely at the presiding judge's discretion.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: Self Reporting and Infrared Thermometer readings will occur upon entry into the courthouse.
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 will be instructed to seek medical advice.
4. Judges and court staff will wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: Hand sanitizer and tissues will be set up at each courtroom entrance and all visitors will be required to apply same before entering the

courtroom. The district judges will arrange to have their respective courtrooms disinfected before and after each court session.

Scheduling

1. The following court docket schedules are established to minimize the court visitor occupancy in the court building:

The four district court judges will continue to coordinate, and jointly schedule, their respective "inmate" criminal dockets, by consolidating their dockets and holding only one "inmate" docket per week with each district court judge rotating as the presiding judge. Furthermore, the district court judges will schedule their "in-person" proceedings weekly on an alternating and rotating basis as follows: Two district court judges will schedule "in-person" proceedings on their respective dockets on every Monday and Wednesday mornings, and the other two district court judges will schedule their respective "in-court" proceedings on their dockets during the afternoon on said days of the week. This process will be reversed on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with the district court judges who scheduled "in-person" proceedings during the morning on Mondays/Wednesdays now scheduling same during the afternoon, and the remaining two courts scheduling same during the morning. If it becomes necessary to schedule any "in-person" proceedings on Fridays, the judge presiding over same shall coordinate with the district court judges to avoid having multiple settings on said day. The district court judges will further utilize the services of their designated associate magistrate judge to preside over a consolidated "uncontested docket, and when appropriate and necessary, a consolidated contested docket. All district court judges will maintain their ability to schedule any other proceedings(s) remotely on any given day.

2. The remainder of the courts will coordinate their schedules in the same or like manner.

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 scheduled to appear in court will be accommodated by telephonic/video conferencing or other available 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. Elevators and common areas are controlled and secured by the Webb County Sheriff and Webb County Judge. The district judges will recommend the following social distancing measures to the Sheriff and County Judge: No more than two individuals not from the same household should be permitted in an elevator. If more than one individual from the same household is in an elevator, no other individuals should 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 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 each courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, clerk, court reporter, and bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is a safe social distancing 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.
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, Sheriff Deputy or Court Bailiff 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 prohibited from entering the building.
2. Additionally, a Sheriff's Deputy will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of everyone attempting to enter the building. 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 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 masks.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals over the age of 2 years entering the court building will be required 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.
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

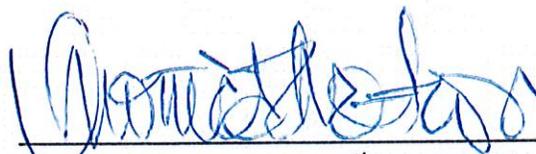
1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned between court sessions and before the start of any other County business in the court building (Webb County Justice Center).
2. Court building cleaning staff or court staff will clean the courtrooms and holding cells before and after every court session.
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

The Webb County courts have revised their Jury Plan to limit the amount of persons in the building and to promote safe social distancing while selecting and conducting jury trials. See Addendum B.

I have conferred with each of the district court judges and have attempted to confer with all other judges with courtrooms in the Webb County court building regarding this Emergency Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I also consulted with the local health authority and county judge, 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 Emergency Operating Plan conduct proceedings in a socially safe manner consistent with the instant plan.

Date: 5/13/2020



Monica Z. Notzon, 111th District Court Judge
Local Administrative District Judge