

COVID-19 Operating Plan for Liberty Hill

Municipal Court of Record

Effective August 1, 2020

Presiding Judge Kevin R. Madison

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the Justice Center building housing the court and the **Municipal Court of Liberty Hill, Williamson County, Texas** will implement the following protective measures:

General

1. The presiding judge 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. The presiding judge 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. The presiding judge will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than **August 1, 2020**.

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. The judge and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: The Judge and court staff will submit to the measuring of their temperature before entering the courtroom or court offices. If any judge, court clerk, or court staff member has a temperature equal to or greater than 99.6°F, that person will not be permitted to enter the offices or courtroom and shall be sent home and should monitor their medical condition and seek the counsel and advice of their personal physician.
3. Judge 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. Judges and court staff should not come to work if they exhibit any of these symptoms or a fever equal to or greater than 99.6°F.
4. Judges and court staff are required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.

5. Protective Measures: All court staff and judges shall wear cloth, fabric, or surgical masks or bandana that completely cover their mouth and nose, practice social distancing of a minimum of 6 feet from any other person, using antimicrobial hand sprays and gels, such as Purell and Germ-X, utilize frequent hand washing, especially after handling any documents, touching any doorknobs, computer keyboards, telephones, etcetera. Staff will also ensure that their immediate work area is periodically wiped down with cleaners that contain sanitizing properties that kill viruses and bacteria, such as **Clorox**® wipes and sprays.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building: No more than **4 persons at a time** will be admitted into the courtroom, in addition to court security personnel, the judge, and the court clerk. All persons in the courtroom and in the lobby, waiting to be processed, shall wear a cloth, fabric covering, bandana, or surgical mask that completely covers their mouth and nose and shall maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet between any other person, inside the courtroom and while in the court building, such as the lobby. Persons who are waiting to be admitted into the courtroom shall wait in their car or outside in the parking lot until called (by cell phone) to enter the courtroom.

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 telephone, tele conference or video conference.

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, including breakrooms and snack rooms, are closed to the public.

Gallery

4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of the courtroom has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
5. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.
6. In each 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 have been placed in the lobby and in the courtroom.
2. Tissues have been placed in the lobby and in the courtroom.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in the court lobby.

Screening of all Persons Entering Court Building

1. When individuals attempt to enter the courtroom, Court staff and/or Bailiffs 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 courtroom and will be advised that the court will re-set their court date and that they can contact the court to re-set their appearance or request a hearing via tele-conference or by video-conferencing.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the courtroom, Court staff or Bailiffs will use an infrared (touchless) thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 99.6°F will be refused admittance to the courtroom.
3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the courtroom will be provided personal protective equipment, including face masks and gloves. It is highly encouraged that screening personnel wear goggles or glasses, since tear ducts are known to be a point of entry for the COVID-19 virus.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the courtroom will be required to wear face coverings at all times, which shall be either cloth or fabric covering, bandana, or surgical mask that completely covers their mouth and nose.

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces, such as counter-tops are cleaned and sanitized at least once every 8 hours, during times

that the Court is open to the public. Court staff will try to clean the lectern where defendants stand before the judge and court doorknobs with **Clorox**® wipes and sprays or alcohol sprays between each defendant who appears.

2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms between every trial and every evening.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus such as **Clorox**® wipes and sprays.
4. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

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

Date: 5/28/2020



Presiding Judge of Municipal Court
Honorable Kevin R. Madison

Kevin Madison

To: Rick Hall
Subject: 05 28 2020 - Liberty Hill Municipal Court COVID-19 Operating Plan draft

From: Rick Hall <rhall@libertyhilltx.gov>
Sent: Thursday, May 28, 2020 9:18 AM
To: Kevin Madison <kevin@kevinmadison.com>
Subject: RE: 05 22 2020 - Liberty Hill Municipal Court COVID-19 Operating Plan draft

Kevin,

Sorry not replying on Friday. I think this is a great plan. Please move forward with this.

RICK HALL

Mayor – City of Liberty Hill

City Hall: 926 Loop 332

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512-650-5674 (Cell)

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From: Kevin Madison <kevin@kevinmadison.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 28, 2020 9:00 AM
Subject: RE: 05 22 2020 - Liberty Hill Municipal Court COVID-19 Operating Plan draft

Mayor,

Please let me know your thoughts on this proposed re-opening plan, after you have had an opportunity to review it and let me know if you have any questions. I would like to get your nod of approval before submitting our plan to the state. . Again, I don't see the court fully re-opening for "in person" hearings until after August 1.

Thank you,
Judge Madison

From: Kevin Madison <kevin@kevinmadison.com>
Sent: Friday, May 22, 2020 2:34 PM
To: Rick Hall <rhall@libertyhilltx.gov>
Subject: 05 22 2020 - Liberty Hill Municipal Court COVID-19 Operating Plan draft

Dear Mayor Hall,

I just finished drafting our required COVID-19 Court Operating Plan with tentative plans to re-open the court for in-person proceedings in August. Of course, this depends in large part how this pandemic spreads or slows down in the next few weeks after the state and county governments are allowing businesses to re-open.

I am required, by the Texas Supreme Court and Office of Court Administration (OCA), to prepare an operating plan, based off a template that the OCA sent to all Texas judges. I am also required, as are all Texas judges, to "consult" with our local county health officials and our mayor about our operating plan. In Williamson County our County Health Director is Dr. Lori Palazzo. I submitted my plan to her and she had a couple of suggested changes, which I made and incorporated into this new (attached) revised order.

I am now required to "consult" with the you, as Mayor, about the plan. I have been working on this and polishing it for several weeks now, after consulting with 4 other county epidemiology health experts. Again, I don't see the court fully re-opening for "in person" hearings until August. Tracy and I have already initiated procedures and software to allow us to conduct virtual court and 3-way calling tele-conference court at our June 1 docket. All of us have been contacting defendants and working on cases- Tracy, Margarita, myself, and Tad. Please let me know your thoughts on this proposed re-opening plan, after you have had an opportunity to review it and let me know if you have any questions.

Kevin Madison

To: Lori Palazzo
Cc: Rick Hall; Attorney Kevin R Madison
Subject: COVID-19 Court Operating Plan for Liberty Hill

Dear Dr. Palazzo,

Thank you for your consultation regarding my proposed COVID-19 Court Operating Plan for Liberty Hill Municipal Court of Record.

I agree with your suggestion to work remotely if possible. Liberty Hill Municipal Court is already working on activating and using a remote "Virtual Court" software program with Tyler Technologies. My Court Clerk, my Prosecutor, and I are calling defendants and working out as many cases as we can, informally, now.

I will talk to Mayor Rick Hall about decreasing the number of defendants even more. I think we could cut that number down to 2-3 persons at most and have people wait in their cars and we can call them on their cell phone when we are ready to see them, which will be kept to a brief visit.

I understand (my wife is a RN and I am an EMT) that this virus is a respiratory virus and that the infectious viral particles can remain suspended in air for minutes and then also fall on surfaces. We will try to minimize all time in the courtroom. Again, we are not planning on opening "in-person" sessions anytime soon. Thank you for your assistance!

Yours truly,
Judge Kevin R. Madison

Judge Kevin R. Madison
Presiding Judge
Liberty Hill Municipal Court of Record
Judge's cell: (512) 784-5237

From: Lori Palazzo <lori.palazzo@wilco.org>
Sent: Monday, May 18, 2020 6:28 PM
To: Kevin Madison <kevin@kevinmadison.com>
Subject: Operating Plan for Liberty Hill

Good afternoon Judge Madison,

I have had the opportunity to review your plan for Liberty Hill and have a few comments. First and foremost, I can't stress enough the importance of doing everything and anything you can remotely if possible. We are still seeing new cases every day and our case counts and hospital numbers are going up not down. Covid is still out there and it is still a significant risk for all of us. That being said, if you have to open the courtroom I would suggest having the least amount of individuals you need to get the job done and if it can be less than 8 that would be better. And the time spent in the courtroom itself should be as short as possible. Even with everyone wearing masks and being 6 feet apart, staying in an enclosed space for any amount of time greater than 20 minutes increases everyone's risk of being exposed to the disease and the viral load is highest in asymptomatic people who will pass your screening criteria. Covid virus particles

are known to stay on surfaces for extended periods of time so I would suggest you modify your cleaning and disinfecting of common surfaces to every 2 hours at minimum and this would include door knobs, door push bars and of course the restrooms. Other than these few items your plan looks good to me but again the more you can do remotely the better for all concerned.

Thank you.

Lori L Palazzo MD

Medical Director, Local Health Authority WCCHD

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