



COVID-19 OPERATING PLAN FOR IN-PERSON COURT HEARINGS IN JIM WELLS COUNTY

WHEREAS, beginning in 2019, a novel coronavirus, now designated SARSCoV2 which causes the disease COVID-19, has spread through the world and has now been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization; and

WHEREAS, symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, coughing, and shortness of breath. In some cases the virus has caused death; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, the Governor of the State of Texas issued a proclamation declaring a state of disaster for all counties in Texas; and

WHEREAS, Jim Wells County has determined extraordinary measures must be taken to contain, mitigate, and prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Jim Wells County and to facilitate the efficient, rapid, and cooperative response to the emergency; and

WHEREAS, Jim Wells County has issued several Orders since the extension of the Disaster Declaration under the authority of Section 418 of the Texas Government Code that authorizes the County Judge "to control ingress and egress to and from a disaster area and the movement of persons and the occupancy of premises in the area",

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED AND ORDERED BY THE COUNTY JUDGE AND COMMISSIONERS OF JIM WELLS COUNTY THAT:

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges and other individuals entering the buildings housing all courts in Jim Wells County, the Commissioner's Court hereby adopts and implements, to the extent that such implementation is feasible and consistent with the availability of safety supplies and manpower, the following measures:

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judges and Court Staff who have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.4⁰ 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 housing the courtroom.

2. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing and engage in appropriate hygiene practices to the extent consistent with the practicalities of in-person proceedings.

Scheduling

1. Judges and clerks will exercise reasonable efforts to schedule proceedings in a manner which will reduce courtroom occupancy.

Vulnerable Populations

If your attendance is required in one of the courts of Jim Wells County and if you are a member of a vulnerable population, please notify the court manager listed on your Notice of Setting so that arrangements can be made for your safety while in the courthouse.

Based upon information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the following conditions constitute whether you are a member of a vulnerable population:

- People 65 years and older
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, *particularly if not well controlled*, including:
 - People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
 - People who have serious heart conditions
 - People who are immunocompromised
- Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications
- People with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
- People with diabetes
- People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- People with liver disease

Please park on the Cameron side of the courthouse (or as close thereto). This will avoid an extended walk into the building. There are two parking spaces on the north side and south side of the courthouse (four total) designated for disabled parking. The wheelchair ramp is also located on the Cameron side.

Social Distancing

1. All persons permitted in the court building who are not from the same household will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet.
2. Social distancing of at least 6 feet will be required in common areas.
3. Social distancing of at least 6 feet will be required in the courtroom.

4. Social distancing of at least 6 feet will be required in the jury room when used for conferencing. In the case of jurors participating in a jury trial, accommodations, consistent with jury privacy and security, will be made to accomplish social distancing of at least 6 feet.
5. A seating diagram in accordance with social distancing guidelines shall be developed for each courtroom of the county. The diagram will designate seating for all attendees at each courtroom. The Justice Courtroom in the basement shall not be used for courtroom proceedings due to a lack of adequate space to insure social distancing. Justice Court shall be held in the County or District Courtroom subject to availability.

Hygiene

1. To the extent supplies and ancillary equipment are available to the county government, hand sanitizer dispensers will be made available to persons in the court building at the entrance to the building and the entrance to the courtroom. The absence of such hand sanitizer or dispensers shall not affect the right of the court to conduct in-person proceedings.

Screening

1. Court building security personnel will ask each person entering the building if they feel feverish, or are experiencing 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 have had known close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19. A person who responds affirmatively to this inquiry will not be permitted to enter the building housing the courtroom.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, Court building security personnel will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. If the indicated temperature equals or exceeds 100.4⁰ F, following 2 consecutive temperature measurements by infrared thermometer, the individual will not be permitted to enter 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 before transport. If the inmates Temperature equals or exceeds 100.4⁰ or the inmate demonstrates any symptoms of COVID-19, the inmate will not be transported.
4. Court building security personnel will, to the extent available to the county government, be provided face masks, gloves and hand sanitizer for their use while on duty.
5. To the extent any of these screening measures are impractical or cost-prohibitive, alternate means of achieving such measures, such as signage, may be implemented if approved by local health authorities.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times, unless circumstances specific to the purpose for which that person is present at the court building require that the face covering be temporarily removed. After completing the task which required removal of the face covering, the person shall resume wearing the face

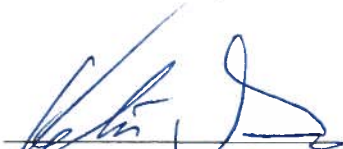
covering. All face coverings worn must cover the wearer's mouth and nose at all times, unless temporarily excused as provided in this paragraph. Failure or refusal to wear face coverings as provided in this paragraph will result in immediate expulsion of the person failing or refusing to wear the face covering in compliance with this paragraph.

2. Persons seeking to be admitted to the court building for the purpose of observing or participating in an in-person judicial proceeding who are not wearing a face covering, will be provided a disposable face mask, if the county government authority which owns the court building has an adequate supply of face masks. Failure or refusal to wear a face mask or face covering as provided in paragraph 1 "Face Coverings" or this paragraph will result in immediate expulsion of the person failing or refusing to wear the face covering in compliance with this paragraph or paragraph 1 "Face Coverings".
3. Subject to each department head's policy, county personnel may remove their masks once in their office and when not engaged with members of the public.

Responsibilities of County Cleaning Personnel

1. The county government authority shall instruct its maintenance and cleaning staff to clean the courtrooms and common areas of the court building at the beginning of each day between morning and afternoon proceedings, and at the end of each day the courtroom is used. In addition, the following protocols shall be followed, and appropriate signage posted to inform members of the public of measures that affect their use of elevators and bathrooms.
2. Regularly and frequently clean and disinfect any regularly touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, tables, chairs, and restrooms.
3. Limit the use of public restrooms to one individual at a time, excepting children needing assistance and individuals subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act who may be or accompanied by the individual's caregiver.
4. Limit the use of standard-size elevators to one individual at a time. Masks should be worn in elevators. For individuals not wishing to ride an elevator, ensure stairways are available for use. As appropriate, individuals subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act may ride the elevator alone or accompanied by the individual's caregiver. Children with a parent and members of the same household may ride the elevator together.
5. Disinfect any items that come into contact with courthouse visitors.
6. Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar disinfectant readily available to employees, contractors, and courthouse visitors.
7. Place readily visible signage at the office to remind everyone of best hygiene practices.
8. Authorize individual(s) on staff who shall be dedicated to ensuring the health protocols adopted by the office are being successfully implemented and followed.

Signed this 8th day of June, 2020.



Commissioner Pct. 2
Juan Rodriguez, Jr., County Judge **(Presiding-County Judge)**



ATTEST:



J.C. Perez, III, County Clerk