

Minimum Standard Health Protocols for In-Person Operations for the Carrollton Municipal Court

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the building housing the courts, the Carrollton 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.

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. 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.
2. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all times.
3. Protective Measures:
 - a. Seating in court lobbies and courtrooms has been marked to indicate where it is safe for patrons to sit with social distancing considerations in mind.
 - b. Window clerks already work behind protective glass and will work diligently to minimize contact with defendants.
 - c. Protective plexiglass barriers have been installed at the clerk's station and bailiff's station in each courtroom to separate clerks and bailiffs from court participants.
 - d. Staff has installed signage throughout the court building reminding patrons about the importance of social distancing, wearing face masks, and maintaining proper hygiene.

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
 - a. Dockets will move forward as scheduled but will be limited to 15 defendants.
 - b. Only 11 defendants will be allowed in each courtroom at a time to accommodate social distancing requirements for seating.
 - c. Defendants are encouraged to utilize existing convenience options to dispose of citations, such as on-line payment, payment at the kiosk at the entrance of the

Municipal Court building and submitting payment and other documents via regular mail.

- d. Jury trials will not resume until further notice.

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 court's website and in conspicuous locations around the court building.
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by allowing liberal resets or utilizing appropriate video procedures to conduct matters.

Social Distancing

1. Social distancing guidelines will only allow for 25% of maximum occupancy in the various areas of the court building at any one time. Court staff will monitor and control the number of people in these areas. Occupancy limits are as follows:
 - a. Lobby adjacent to clerks' windows: 7 people
 - b. Lobby adjacent to courtrooms: 14 people
 - c. Courtroom #1: 25 people*
 - d. Courtroom #2: 27 people*
 - e. Community Room: 25 people

* Given seating arrangements based upon social distancing requirements, only 11 defendants will be allowed to sit in each courtroom at any one time.
2. 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.
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.
5. Staff has placed social distancing signage on doors, windows, and floors throughout the court building.

Gallery

6. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of each courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
7. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing for seating. Seating is limited to every other row and is designated six (6) feet apart.

Well

8. In each courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, clerk seating and bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least six (6) feet between each space.
9. Plexiglass dividers have been installed between counsel tables, at the bailiff's workstation, and at the clerk's workstation in each courtroom.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building, outside of each courtroom, and in the lobbies adjacent to the clerks' windows and courtrooms.
2. Tissues have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand and on the judges' benches.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations in the court building.

Screening

1. Prior to entering the court building, all individuals will be required to complete a brief questionnaire to determine whether: 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.
 - a. If an individual who is refused admittance to the court building is set for an in-person proceeding, that individual may either reset their case to a later date or join the proceeding virtually.
2. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including face masks, gloves, sanitizing wipes, and hand sanitizer.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals entering the court building, including all court staff, 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.

Cleaning

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are cleaned at least every two hours.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms at the beginning of the workday, before and after each docket, and at the end of each day the courtroom is used.
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

- Information flyers have been prepared to inform defendants about all COVID-19 guidelines for visiting the court and will be included in future court mailings and posted at the entrance to the court building.
- Defendants will be asked to not bring additional persons with them to court settings unless they are needed for physical assistance. Additional persons not needed for physical assistance will be asked to remain outside the court building.
- Defendants are encouraged to utilize available convenience options to dispose of outstanding matters, including paying citations online and at the payment kiosk at the entrance of the Municipal Court building, requesting DSC or deferred disposition online, or by mailing in payments or requests to dispose of citations.

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