

COVID-19 PANDEMIC OPERATING PLAN FOR THE JUDICIARY

EDWARDS, KIMBLE, MASON, MCCULLOCH AND MENARD COUNTIES

Minimum COVID-19 Health Standard PROTOCOL Effective March 19, 2021

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of courthouse officials and staff, attorneys, litigants, clients, service providers, delivery staff, visitors, and other individuals entering buildings where administration and proceedings are conducted by the 452nd Judicial District and the County and Justice Courts of Edwards, Kimble, Mason, McCulloch and Menard Counties, the Local Administrative District Judge for said counties hereby implements the following protective measures as directed by and pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 74.092, Covid-19 Emergency Orders issued by the Supreme Court of Texas and Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, and Texas Office of Court Administration Guidance.

All judges in Edwards, Kimble, Mason, McCulloch and Menard County Courts will continue to implement the following protective measures to maximize the health and safety of the aforementioned persons. I have conferred or attempted to confer with all judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building regarding this Minimum COVID-19 Health Standard Protocol.

Those measures will include, at a minimum, the following:

General

1. All judges will comply with applicable Emergency Orders issued by the Texas Supreme Court and Texas Court of Criminal Appeals and this Protocol.
2. In their discretion, all judges should, but are no longer required to, use reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely in accordance with the 26th Emergency Order of the Supreme Court of Texas.

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judges and court staff will self-monitor and report concerns or symptoms as appropriate and will not be permitted to enter court buildings if probable or confirmed to have COVID-19.
2. Judges and court staff are recommended to wear face masks, follow hygiene recommendations and practice social distancing.
3. Plexiglass dividers and barriers will continue to be utilized as needed.

Scheduling

1. Judges and Coordinators of the various courts located in the 452nd Judicial District will work together to minimize occupancy in court buildings and periodically update schedules maintained by the District Court.
2. In-person jury trials are permitted in accordance with the 36th Emergency Order of the Supreme Court of Texas which requires permission of the Local Administrative District Judge.

Vulnerable Populations

1. Individuals age 65-72 are a member of a Vulnerable Population. Individuals over age 72 and any individual who receive oxygen therapy or has a serious underlying health condition, such as

high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, decreased lung capacity, diabetes, obesity, asthma, compromised immune systems (including by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy) are a member of a Highly Vulnerable Population.

2. Individuals who are in the Vulnerable or Highly Vulnerable Population are obligated to contact the court to identify themselves if they wish to receive accommodations pursuant to this Protocol or prior Operating Plans.
3. Individuals who are in the Highly Vulnerable Population shall be permitted to enter court buildings and attend court proceedings, but shall make diligent efforts to attend court virtually.

Social Distancing and Hygiene

1. All persons shall make reasonable efforts to comply with individual requirements for Social Distancing and Hygiene set forth in the Operating Plan dated May 28, 2020.
2. Each county shall make reasonable efforts to comply with the requirements for Social Distancing and Hygiene set forth in the Operating Plan dated May 28, 2020.

Screening and Face Coverings

1. Bailiffs and other security personnel are authorized, but not required, to enforce any provision of the Operating Plan dated May 28, 2021 and may, at their discretion, do so. Specifically, they may refuse entry or evict anyone who does not comply.
2. At their discretion, judges may require any or all provisions of the Operating Plan dated May 28, 2021 inside buildings on days when in-person court proceedings are conducted before them there.

Cleaning

Buildings shall be cleaned in reasonable compliance with the provisions of the Operating Plan dated May 28, 2021.

Other

1. A violation of this plan may constitute Contempt of Court, subjecting the violator to a fine of up to \$500 and a jail sentence of up to 180 days.
2. This Protocol will expire on June 1, 2021 unless renewed.

This order is signed and effective this the 17th day of March, 2021.

Robert R. Hofmann, Local Administrative District Judge