

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Cameron 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 **Cameron County** 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.
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 administrator and county judge and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the county.
4. Judges may begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than June 1, 2020

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judges and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: As per Human Resources Guidelines.
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.4°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.
4. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time.
5. Protective Measures: As per Human Resources Guidelines. - *see attached*

Scheduling

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:
See Attachment "A".

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 conducting hearings through zoom or any other method to conduct remote hearings. If the above is not possible, placing them in an isolated jury room with a laptop in the Courthouse once the individual is identified as part of the vulnerable population.

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. No more than two individuals not from the same household will be permitted in an elevator. If more than one individual from the same household is in an elevator, no other individuals will 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 snackrooms, 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, and clerk, court reporter, and bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space. Plexiglass Protection will be installed as needed in the courtroom.

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 Cameron County Public Health's "5 Steps for Disease Prevention Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations on each floor of the court building.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, Security 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 court building.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, Security will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.4°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 Masks, Gloves, Plastic Face Shields.

Face Coverings

1. All individuals 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 at least every four hours.
2. Court building cleaning staff will clean the courtrooms between every hearing, between morning and afternoon proceedings, 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.

I have conferred with all judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority and county judge. I will ensure that the judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: May 22, 2020



Benjamin Euresti, Jr.,
Local Administrative District Judge

**Cameron County Jail Zoom and In Person Court Proceedings Schedule
Effective June 1, 2020**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00 am – 11:00 am	Judge Juan A. Magallanes 357 th District Court ----- Judge Elia C. Lopez 404 th District Court ----- Judge Benjamin Euresti, Jr. 107 th District Court	Judge Adolfo E. Cordova Jr. 197 th District Court ----- Judge Juan A. Magallanes 357 th District Court	Judge Arturo McDonald County Court at Law #1 ----- Judge Benjamin Euresti, Jr. 107 th District Court	Judge Janet Leal 103 rd District Court ----- Judge David Gonzalez III County Court at Law #3	Judge Estela Chavez Vasquez County Court at Law #5 ----- Associate Judge Gilberto Rosas Child Support
11:00 am – 2:00 pm	Judge Gloria Rincones 445 th District Court ----- Judge Sheila Garcia- Bence County Court at Law #4	Judge David Sanchez 444 th District Court ----- Judge Estela Chavez Vasquez County Court at Law #5 ----- Judge Laura Betancourt County Court at Law #2	Judge David Sanchez 444 th District Court ----- Judge Arturo McDonald County Court at Law #1	Judge Arturo Cisneros Nelson 138 th District Court ----- Judge Adolfo E. Cordova Jr. 197 th District Court ----- Judge Gloria Rincones 445 th District Court	Associate Judge James Belton CPS Court
2:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Judge Laura Betancourt County Court at Law #2 ----- Judge Arturo Cisneros Nelson 138 th District Court	Judge David Gonzalez III County Court at Law #3 -----	Judge Elia C. Lopez 404 th District Court ----- Associate Judge James Belton CPS Court	Judge Sheila Garcia- Bence County Court at Law #4 ----- Judge Janet Leal 103 rd District Court	

****Civil Cases and Criminal Cases hearings where defendants are not in custody may be scheduled via-zoom at any time.**

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Please Note: 8:00- 9:00 a.m. Jail Zoom is reserved for Magistrate Court proceedings daily. Therefore Jail Zoom is not available for our courts during this time slot.