

COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Tarrant County Judiciary
(This plan supercedes the plan dated March 23, 2021)
June 7, 2021

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 **Tarrant County** will implement the following protective measures:

General

All courts will follow the health and safety protocols as established by the Commissioner's Court of Tarrant County.

All judges should continue to use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely. In person proceedings, however, are allowed in the respective courts.

Upon request and good cause shown by a court participant other than a juror-including but not limited to a party, an attorney, a witness, or a court reporter-a court must permit the participant to participate remotely in any proceeding, subject to constitutional limitations.

The local administrative district judge will adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the county.

Judge and Court Staff Health

Courts should take precautions to ensure judges and court staff do not enter the courthouse when there is a likelihood that they may have COVID-19 or have been recently exposed to COVID-19, and courts should take reasonable steps to protect judges and court staff from contracting COVID-19.

Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 100.0°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 should not be permitted in a court facility.

Judges will establish policies as to procedures within their respective courtroom to minimize the likelihood of any participant in the court proceedings violating any social distancing rules.

Hygiene

Courts should consider having hand sanitizer dispensers available at various locations. Courts should ensure that tissues are available for public use in courtrooms and other public areas around the courtroom.

Jury Trials

Information on precautions that have been taken to protect the health and safety of prospective jurors and COVID-19 questionnaires that elicit from prospective jurors information about their exposure or vulnerability to COVID-19 shall be included in the jury summons. Courts should allow thirty (30) days notice to the central jury room bailiff and the local administrative judge of the intent to schedule a jury trial to ensure that the necessary amount of jury summons may be sent to the prospective jurors.

Cleaning

Sanitizing should be more regularly performed when in-person hearings are conducted in the courtroom between witnesses, between hearings, and after a hearing recesses.

I have attempted to confer with all judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building regarding this Operating Plan. I will ensure that the judges of courts with courtrooms in the court buildings covered by this Operating Plan conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.



Judge George Gallagher
Local Administrative District Judge
Tarrant County, Texas