

## MINIMUM HEALTH PROTOCOLS FOR THE HOOD COUNTY JUDICIARY PURSUANT TO THE MOST RECENT SUPREME COURT EMERGENCY ORDER RELATED TO COVID-19

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 **Hood 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 physical distancing, maximum group size, and other restrictions and precautions.
2. Judges may use reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely, subject to constitutional limitations.
3. The local administrative district judge will maintain regular communication with the local health authority and county judge and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the county.
4. Judges may set non-essential in-person proceedings. Judges shall establish communication protocol that requires every participant in a proceeding to alert the court if the participant has, or knows of another participant who had: (i) COVID-19 or a fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, congestions or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea; or (ii) recently been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19 or exhibiting the symptoms described above. Judges shall take any other reasonable action to avoid exposing court proceedings and participants to the threat of COVID-19.

### **Judge and Court Staff Health**

1. Judge and court staff shall practice the recommended safety measures for COVID-19.
2. 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 may not be permitted to enter the building and should seek medical advice.
3. The courts shall publish schedules which are established to reduce occupancy in court buildings. Jury Trials shall be scheduled with the Local Administrative Judge to minimize building occupancy load.

### **Vulnerable Populations**

1. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated on a case by case basis.

### **Physical Distancing**

1. All persons in the court building are encouraged to maintain adequate physical distancing.
2. Each judge should monitor the courtroom with regard to appropriate social distancing, and may make any appropriate adjustment to secure safety.

### **Hygiene**

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at multiple places throughout court buildings.
2. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations on each floor of the court building.

### **Screening**

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, court security officers may 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 may be refused admittance to the court building. If such an individual is scheduled to be a participant in a court proceeding, the decision on whether to allow the individual to participate in the proceeding will be made in consultation with the Judge of that court, and will be made in consideration of all other health and safety protocols as established herein.
2. Inmates being transported from the jail to the court building will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and may have their temperature taken prior to transport. Inmates with symptoms or a temperature equal to or above 99.6°F may not be transported to the court building.

### **Face Coverings**

1. Face coverings are allowed but not required. Judges may require witnesses who are testifying to lower or remove their mask during testimony so long as all other safety protocols herein are followed.
2. Individuals will be allowed to bring cloth face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering, a disposable face mask may be provided if the supply is available.

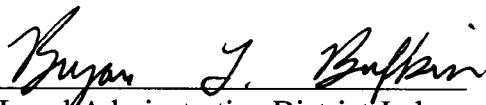
### **Cleaning**

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas as often as necessary to ensure public safety.
2. Court building cleaning staff shall be provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
3. Court building cleaning staff shall be trained on proper clearing techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.

## Jury Proceedings

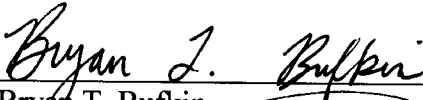
1. In-person jury proceedings must be approved by the local administrative judge.
2. In-person jury proceedings must follow all established minimum standard health protocols approved by the local administrative judge.
3. Judges must consider on the record any objection or motion related to continuing with the jury proceeding at least seven days before the jury proceeding or as soon as practicable if the objection or motion is made or filed within seven days of the jury proceeding.
4. Judges shall establish communication protocol to ensure that no court participants have tested positive for COVID-19 within the previous 10 days, have had symptoms of COVID-19 with the previous 10 days, or have had recent exposure to COVID-19 within the previous 14 days.
5. Judges must include with the jury summons a COVID-19 questionnaire to be submitted in advance of jury selection that elicits from prospective jurors information about their exposure or particular vulnerability to COVID-19.
6. Judges must, upon request by a prospective juror, excuse or reschedule any prospective juror who provides information confirming their COVID-19 infection or exposure or their particular vulnerability to COVID-19.

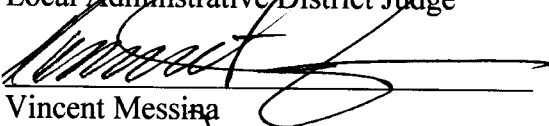
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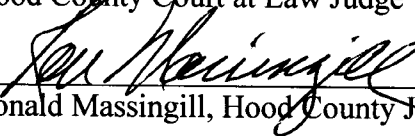
  
Bryan J. Bulkin  
Local Administrative District Judge

**Acknowledgment**


I have been provided a copy of the Covid-19 Operating Plan for the Hood County Judiciary. I have reviewed and approve the plan and agree to conduct court proceedings accordingly.


  
Bryan T. Burkin  
Local Administrative District Judge


  
Vincent Messina  
Hood County Court at Law Judge

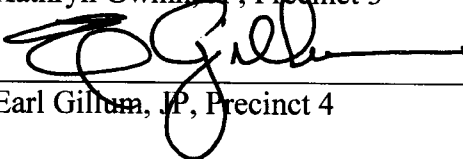
  
Ronald Massingill, Hood County Judge

David A. Barkley, Associate Judge – Child Protection Court

  
Roger Howell, JP, Precinct 1

  
Martin Castillo, JP, Precinct 2

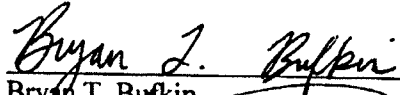
  
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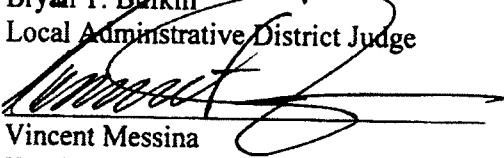
  
Earl Gillum, JP, Precinct 4

Dr. David Blocker, M.D.  
Local Health Authority

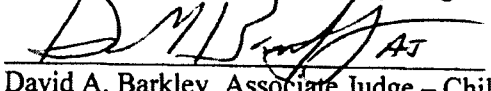
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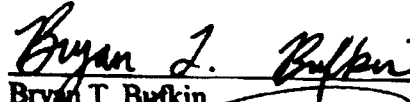
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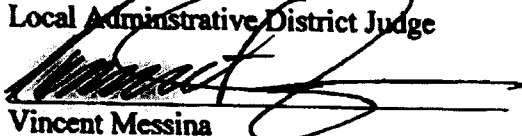
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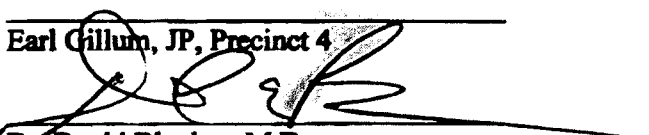
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