

## **Minimum COVID-19 Standard Protocols for the Brown County Judiciary**

Brown County will continue to implement certain protective measures to maximize the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the buildings housing the courts. 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.
2. All judges will continue to use reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.

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

1. Judges and court staff will self-monitor and report concerns or symptoms as appropriate.
2. Judges and court staff are recommended to wear face masks and practice social distancing.
3. Plexiglass dividers and barriers will continue to be utilized as needed.

### **Scheduling**

Court coordinators of the various courts located in the Brown County courthouse will work together to minimize occupancy in the court building.

### **Vulnerable Populations**

1. Individuals over 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 should continue to 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 should be posted on the courts' websites and in conspicuous locations around the court building.
3. Upon a showing of good cause, vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court may be allowed to attend court remotely, testify by affidavit, or by written/video deposition.

### **Social Distancing**

1. All persons should maintain at least 6 feet separation from other individuals. If such distancing is not feasible, other measures such as hand hygiene, cough etiquette, cleanliness, and sanitation should be rigorously practiced.

### **Hygiene**

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers should be placed at the entrances to the building, outside of elevators on each floor, outside of each courtroom, and outside of bathrooms.
2. Tissues should be placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, on the judges' benches, and in the hallways.

**Screening**

1. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, security personnel may ask the individuals if they are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms, have been diagnosed with COVID-19, or have been in close contact with a person who has COVID-19. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions may be refused admittance to the court building.
2. When individuals enter the court building, security personnel may, at their discretion, use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature is elevated may be refused admittance to the court building.
3. Inmates being transported from the jail to the court building may be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and have their temperature taken prior to transport. Inmates with symptoms or elevated temperature may not be transported to the court building.

**Face Coverings**

All individuals entering the court building are recommended to wear face masks.

**Cleaning**

Staff should continue to clean and sanitize the court building regularly.

**Jury Trials**

1. Prospective jurors are required to wear a face mask while they are in the courthouse and/or Mims Auditorium at Howard Payne University. Prospective jurors are encouraged to bring a face mask with them. If a prospective juror does not have a face mask, a disposable face mask will be provided.
2. All other jury participants, including court staff, parties, and attorneys are required to wear a face mask while they are in the courthouse and/or Mims Auditorium at Howard Payne University during jury proceedings.

I have conferred or attempted to confer with all judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building regarding this Minimum Standard Protocol.

Date: March 16, 2021   
Mike Smith, Local Administrative District Judge