

**SECOND UPDATED HIDALGO COUNTY**  
**COVID-19 MINIMUM STANDARD**  
**HEALTH PROTOCOLS FOR COURT**  
**PROCEEDINGS**

**General**

1. **ALL JUDGES HAVE THE DISCRETION TO WORK REMOTELY OR IN-PERSON.**
2. A district court, statutory or constitutional county court, statutory probate court, justice court, or master courts may conduct in-person proceedings, including both jury and non-jury proceedings, if they follow these HIDALGO COUNTY MINIMUM STANDARD HEALTH PROTOCOLS FOR COURT PROCEEDINGS.
3. All judges will comply with the Emergency Orders issued by the Supreme Court of Texas and Court of Criminal Appeals.
4. This order applies to all courts housed in any Hidalgo County building, including District Courts, County Courts At Law, all Master Courts, Auxiliary Courts, and Justices of the Peace.
5. Subject only to constitutional limitations, all courts in Hidalgo County must avoid risk to court staff, parties, attorneys, jurors, and the public.
6. Except as the Emergency Order issued by the Supreme Court provide otherwise, courts may allow or require anyone involved in any hearing, deposition, or other proceeding of any kind – including but not limited to party, attorney, witness, court reporter, grand juror, or petit juror – to participate remotely, such as by teleconferencing, videoconferencing, or other means.
7. Please note these are minimum standard health protocols. Judges may implement additional safety protocols for their courtrooms.
8. **All courts are to take any other reasonable action to avoid exposing court proceedings and participants to the threat of COVID-19.**

## 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.

## Screening

1. Masks are strongly encouraged to be used at all times when inside the courthouse building, but are not mandated unless otherwise required under other provisions of these protocols.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, and are observed by personnel to be coughing or sneezing, they will be required to wear a mask before being allowed admittance to the court building.
3. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, Health Department personnel or designees will use necessary equipment to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.0 degrees F will be required to wear a mask.
4. 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 degrees F will not be transported to the court building.
5. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, included face coverings or face shields, gloves, and necessary sanitizer and wipes.

## Face Coverings

1. **ALL INDIVIDUALS ENTERING THE COURT BUILDING WILL BE REQUIRED TO WEAR FACE COVERINGS OVER THE NOSE AND MOUTH IF THEY ARE COUGHING, SNEEZING, OR RUNNING A FEVER GREATER THAN 100.0 DEGREES F.**
2. **ANY COURT THAT HAS ANY MEMBER OF ITS STAFF TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 WILL REQUIRE ALL STAFF TO WEAR MASKS UNTIL ALL THE INFECTED STAFF TEST NEGATIVE.**
3. **ANY DEPARTMENT THAT IS WORKING IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE COURTS, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE DISTRICT CLERK'S OFFICE, COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE, DA'S OFFICE, PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE, AND INDIGENT**

**DEFENSE OFFICE, WILL REQUIRE ALL THE STAFF TO WEAR MASKS IF TWO OR MORE EMPLOYEES OF THEIR DEPARTMENT TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 AT THE SAME TIME. MASKS WILL BE REQUIRED WHILE AT THE COURTHOUSE AND IN THEIR DEPARTMENTS UNTIL ALL INFECTED STAFF TEST NEGATIVE.**

### **Cleaning**

1. Court building cleaning staff will clean the common areas of the court building so that common spaces are clean.
2. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.
4. All Court personnel should be trained or will be trained on proper cleaning techniques in order to assist in the cleaning, when necessary.

THESE PROTOCOLS ARE SUBJECT TO BEING AMENDED AS NEEDED FOR THE PROTECTION OF ALL PARTICIPANTS WITHIN THE COURT SYSTEM.

Signed this the 31<sup>ST</sup> day of May, 2022

**Effective date: 5/31/2022**



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Judge Noe Gonzalez  
Local Administrative District Judge  
Of Hidalgo County, Texas