Travis County Criminal District Courts

District Court Plan for Resuming In-Person Jury Trials & Dockets Effective February 28, 2022

The District Courts plan to resume in-person jury trials and limited in-person dockets effective February 28, 2022. These dockets may be held along with their currently scheduled virtual docket day for in-custody (and out-of-custody) defendants.

In efforts to balance the safety of the public and staff with the administration of justice, this schedule is dependent upon the COVID precaution stage as of February 15, 2022. Should the COVID stage be higher than stage 4 on February 15, this schedule is subject to revision according to the recommended precautions and Travis County governance.

Jury Trials

Beginning on February 28, 2022, the District Courts plan to implement a revised jury schedule (see attached District Voir Dire Calendar). Each Monday morning at 9:00 am, 2 primary District Courts will summons a jury panel of 50 persons each; these 2 Courts will summons an additional 50 jurors on Tuesday and/or Wednesday mornings at 9:00 am, if necessary to fill a panel. Each of these 2 primary courts will have a backup. Attorneys for both the primary and backup courts will have access to the same jury panel.

Once a jury panel is selected, the trial will begin immediately the next business day or as soon as practicable. The new schedule allows for the trial to continue into the next week if necessary.

Masking will be required of all potential jurors, staff and the public entering the CJC; however, social distancing will not be strictly enforced. KN95 masks will be made available to jurors and defense attorneys who are parties to the trial. Based on limited availability, County departments should provide KN95 masks to their employees.

Parties who are scheduled for an in-person jury proceeding must present any objections or motions related to proceedings (including mask objections) at least 10 working days prior to the trial setting or show good cause for an objection or motion filed thereafter. Any objections or motions related to proceeding with an in-person jury proceeding will be heard by the judge presiding over the case at least 7 working days prior to the in-person jury proceeding or as soon as practicable.

Voir dire will be held in the gallery of the assigned court's courtroom. When a juror rises to speak, the Judge may allow the speaker to remove their mask.

Virtual Dockets

Each District Court will continue to have one day of the week scheduled for in-custody and out of custody defendants who are ready to plea that will be held via zoom. Courts may also use

zoom to hold attorney only dockets.

In-Person Dockets

The Courts are committed to prioritizing out of custody defendants appearing in person only when some action will be taken or the Court has determined it is necessary (e.g., admonishments).

Each Court may schedule up to 3 in-person docket days per week if the local health authority and Travis County Commissioners Court guidelines applicable at the time with regards to capacity, distancing, and other health directives will allow. This schedule will be determined by each Court and shared with the relevant departments.

None of the above guidelines will prohibit any individual Court from exercising its judicial discretion in determining the proceedings that may be legally and appropriately held remotely. The Court shall retain its ability to exercise its judicial discretion in determining which proceedings may appropriately be held remotely as stated and allowed by the Texas Supreme Court and Office of Court Administration orders. Any special circumstances or considerations that either party may have, should be presented to the Court at the time of setting for the Court's consideration.