Travis County Criminal District Courts

District Court Plan for Resuming In-Person Jury Trials & Dockets
Effective January 31, 2022

The District Courts plan to resume in-person jury trials and limited in-person dockets effective January 31, 2022. These dockets will 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 January 15, 2022. Should the COVID stage be higher than stage 3 on January 15, this schedule will likely be revised according to recommended precautions.

Jury Trials

Beginning on January 31, 2022, the District Courts will resume a jury schedule of one jury trial every other week (or 2 jury trials per month per court), comparable with the schedules adopted prior to the onset of COVID-19 in 2020. Masking will be required of all potential jurors, staff and the public entering the CJC; however, social distancing will not be strictly enforced. Voir dire will be held in the gallery of the assigned court's courtroom, and selected jurors will be seated in the jury box. When a juror rises to speak, the Judge may allow the speaker to remove their mask. Judges will continue to determine on a case-by-case basis whether to grant continuances if lawyers raise objections to masks. A jury schedule for the Courts will be adopted by the Judges and distributed to all parties.

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.

Prepared by Criminal Court Administration Dec. 14, 2021