# Travis County Criminal Courts at Law

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

The County Courts at Law (CCL) plan to resume in-person jury trials and limited in-person dockets effective January 31, 2022. Each Court will hold 2 in-person and one out of custody virtual docket day per week (see attached in-person and virtual schedule). Bond Review Docket (BRD) will continue to be held virtually Monday through Friday; however, each Court (except for CCL#4) will hold BRD for a full week on a rotating schedule, similar to how it was conducted prior to COVID. CCL#4 will hold a virtual in-custody docket each Wednesday afternoon.

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 CCL's will resume a regular jury schedule (see attached 2022 Court Docket Schedule), comparable with the schedule 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. Each Court will determine whether they will continue to hold their virtual and in-person dockets during their jury week; however, jury trials will not be held during the Court's assigned BRD week.

### Virtual Dockets

Each CCL will continue to have one day of the week scheduled for 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.

BRD will be held virtually on a weekly rotating basis similar to how it was conducted prior to the onset of COVID (see attached 2022 Court Docket Schedule). For example, CCL#3 will hold BRD virtually the entire week of January 31st. The exception to the rotation is CCL#4, Family Violence Court, which will continue to hold their in-custody dockets virtually on Wednesday afternoons, separate from BRD, based on the nature of the cases.

**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); therefore, each Court will initially schedule 2 days per week for in-person dockets.

The Courts will assess whether additional in-person dockets are needed after a period of time. It should be noted this schedule is dependent on the local health authority and the Travis County Commissioners Court guidelines applicable at the time with regards to capacity, distancing, and other health directives.

**General Information**

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 this judicial discretion 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.