D-1-GN-61-121012

IN THE TRAVIS COUNTY CRIMINAL COURTS

THIRD AMENDED

COVID-19 OPERATING PLAN

October 2022

This Third Amended Operating Plan replaces the Second Amended Operating Plan Regarding COVID-19, which was effective on October 1, 2021. It is intended to comply with the current Emergency Orders issued by the Supreme Court of Texas and other authorities.

This Plan and any updated Emergency Orders will be posted on the Travis County Criminal Courts website at: https://www.traviscountytx.gov/courts/criminal/criminal-courts-covid-19-information

General

1. All courts will continue to comply with the Emergency Orders issued by the Supreme Court of Texas and Court of Criminal Appeals.
2. All courts will post on the court's website located at: https://www.traviscountytx.gov/courts/criminal, the minimum standard health protocols adopted by the Travis County Local Administrative Judge, local health authority, Travis County Commissioners Court and Texas Supreme Court regarding restrictions and precautions.
3. All courts will conduct court proceedings either in person or remotely, except for jury trials, which will be held in-person. The courts may conduct proceedings remotely only if:
   a. exigent circumstances exist
      or
   b. conducting proceedings away from the court's usual location will assist in managing court backlog and a visiting judge is assigned to the court.
4. All judges and court staff will continue to comply with public health, county official and Supreme Court mandates concerning health and safety protocols.

Judge and Court Staff Health.

1. Judges and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will continue to consider teleworking except when their court is scheduled for in-person proceedings or as otherwise directed by their Judge/supervisor. Teleworking requests must be approved in advance by the Judge/supervisor.

Face Coverings

1. Face coverings are not required upon entering the Criminal Justice Center.
2. Individual courts may require a face covering during court proceedings. Face coverings will be provided for the public for deputies assigned to these courts.

In-Person Proceedings:

General

1. A copy of the 2022 Revised District Voir Dire Schedule and the 2022 County Court Docket Schedule is posted on the Criminal Courts' website located at: https://www.traviscountytx.gov/courts/criminal/docket-search
2. All Courts have resumed in-person dockets. Courts may also continue virtual dockets for persons to plead remotely and to conduct jail dockets and hearings. A copy of the schedule for each Court is located at: https://app.box.com/s/3k9bx7oruvy5ambhc0uznp8956q1qkao
3. Bond review Docket is conducted remotely for the participants.

Summoning Jurors

1. The jury clerk must include with in-person juror summonses information regarding all precautions that have been taken to protect the health and safety of prospective jurors (see Attachment D) and COVID questionnaires (see Attachment E) that elicit from prospective jurors information about their exposure or vulnerability to COVID-19.
2. Judges will consider and make any reasonable effort to use, in all appropriate circumstances, juror questionnaires for voir dire to assist in shortening the length of voir dire and/or the number of persons required to appear.
3. Excuses or requests to reschedule from in-person prospective jurors who have been potentiallyexposed, who are symptomatic, and who are vulnerable or live with someone vulnerable to COVID-19 will be liberally granted.

Alternate Jurors

Courts should select alternate jurors to permit the trial to continue in the event of a juror becoming ineligible because of that person's exposure to or contraction of COVID-19.

Appendices

Appendix D – COVID-19 Jury Notice to Criminal Court Jurors

Appendix E – COVID-19 Jury Questionnaire

Signed on September 29, 2022, and effective October 1, 2022.

Presiding Judge of the Criminal Courts