

Minimum COVID-19 Standard Protocols for the Mills County Judiciary

Mills County will continue to implement certain protective measures to maximize the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the buildings housing the courts. Those measures will include, at a minimum, the following:

General

1. All judges will comply with applicable Emergency Orders issued by the Texas Supreme Court.
2. All judges will continue to use reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.

Judge and Court Staff Health

1. Judges and court staff will self-monitor and report to the County Judge concerns or symptoms as appropriate. The County Judge will keep the District Judge informed of local court staff illness and exposures.
2. Judges and court staff are recommended to wear face masks and practice social distancing.
3. Plexiglass dividers and barriers will continue to be utilized as needed.

Scheduling

Court coordinators of the various courts located in the Mills County courthouse will work together to minimize occupancy in the court building.

Vulnerable Populations

1. Unvaccinated individuals over 65 or with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy are considered to be vulnerable populations.
2. Each judge should continue to include information on orders setting hearings, dockets notices, and in other communications notifying individuals who are in vulnerable populations of the ability to contact the court to identify themselves as a vulnerable individual and receive accommodations. A notice with this information should be posted on the courts' websites and in conspicuous locations around the court building.
3. Upon a showing of good cause, vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court may be allowed to attend court remotely, testify by affidavit, or by written/video deposition.

Social Distancing

All persons involved in court proceedings should maintain at least 6 feet separation from other individuals. Other measures such as hand hygiene, cough etiquette, cleanliness, and sanitation should continue to be rigorously practiced.

Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers should be placed in the central hallway of each floor.

2. Tissues should be placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, on the judges' benches, and in jury rooms.

Screening

1. When individuals attempt to enter any active courtroom, security or screening personnel may ask the individuals if they are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms, have been diagnosed with COVID-19, or have been in close contact with a person who has COVID-19. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions may be refused admittance to the court building.
2. Prior to entering an active courtroom, security or screening personnel may, at their discretion, use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature is elevated may be refused admittance to the court, the judge notified and remote participation offered.
3. Inmates being transported from the jail to the court building shall be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and have their temperature taken prior to transport. Inmates with symptoms or elevated temperature may not be transported to the court building.

Face Coverings

All individuals entering an active courtroom are required to wear face masks. Signage will be posted at each entrance to the court building.

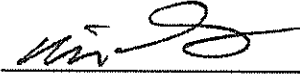
Cleaning

Staff should continue to clean and sanitize the court building regularly.

Jury Trials (including Grand Jury meetings)

1. Prospective jurors are required to wear a face mask while they are in the courthouse or other areas designated for jury selection. Prospective jurors are encouraged to bring a face mask with them. If a prospective juror does not have a face mask, a disposable face mask will be provided.
2. All other jury participants, including court staff, parties, and attorneys are required to wear a face mask while they are in the courthouse or other facility used during jury proceedings

I have conferred or attempted to confer with all judges of courts with courtrooms in the court building regarding this Minimum Standard Protocol.

Date: *March 31, 2021* 
Mike Smith, Local Administrative District Judge