



Judge Emily A. Miskel
470th Judicial District Court

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Minimum Standard Health Protocols for Court Proceedings
Effective March 10, 2021 – June 1, 2021

Pursuant to the Supreme Court of Texas's 36th Emergency Order Regarding the COVID-19 State of Disaster,¹ this document contains the minimum standard health protocols for court proceedings and the public attending court proceedings that will be employed in all courtrooms and throughout all public areas of the court buildings.²

These are the minimum standards that apply in all Collin County courts and court buildings. Each court has the authority to require additional protocols.³

If a court is requiring additional protocols, those protocols will be posted on each court's public website:

- List of District Court Websites - https://www.collincountytx.gov/district_courts/Pages/default.aspx
- List of County Court at Law Websites – https://www.collincountytx.gov/county_court_law/Pages/default.aspx
- List of Justice Court Websites - https://www.collincountytx.gov/justices_peace/Pages/default.aspx

Social Distancing

1. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that people practice social distancing, also called physical distancing, which means staying at least 6 feet away from other people outside of your home.⁴
2. All persons are encouraged to practice social distancing within the courthouse, including in elevators, restrooms, breakrooms, hallways, and the cafeteria.

Hygiene

3. The CDC recommends that people wash their hands often with soap and water. When soap and water are not available, the CDC recommends using a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.⁵

¹ <https://www.txcourts.gov/media/1451833/219026.pdf>

² Section 7(a), 36th Emergency Order

³ Section 3(g), 36th Emergency Order

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html>

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

4. The County has placed hand sanitizer dispensers at the entrances to the building and inside all public restrooms.
5. The County has posted the Texas Department of State Health Service’s “Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer” in multiple locations inside the courthouse.

Screening

6. The CDC recommends that people monitor their health for symptoms of COVID-19 and take their temperature if symptoms develop.⁶
7. If you are sick with COVID-19 or think you might have COVID-19, the CDC recommends that you stay home except to get medical care and separate yourself from other people.⁷
8. Every participant in a proceeding must alert the court if the participant has, or knows of another participant who has:
 - a. COVID-19,
 - b. a fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea; or
 - c. recently been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19 or exhibiting the symptoms described above.⁸
9. Upon request and good cause shown by a court participant other than a juror—including but not limited to a party, an attorney, a witness, or a court reporter—a court must permit the participant to participate remotely in any proceeding, subject to constitutional limitations.⁹ If a court has procedures regarding this process, they will be posted on the court’s public website.

Face Coverings

10. The CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.¹⁰
11. Executive Order GA-34 issued by Texas Governor Greg Abbott on March 2, 2021, strongly encourages individuals to wear face coverings over the nose and mouth wherever it is not feasible to maintain six feet of social distancing from another person not in the same household.¹¹

⁶ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

⁷ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

⁸ Section 3(f), 36th Emergency Order

⁹ Section 5, 36th Emergency Order

¹⁰ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

¹¹ <https://open.texas.gov/uploads/files/organization/opentexas/EO-GA-34-opening-Texas-response-to-COVID-disaster-IMAGE-03-02-2021.pdf>

12. All persons are encouraged to wear face coverings over the nose and mouth while in the courthouse.
13. Each court has the discretion to determine on a case-by-case basis when other measures are sufficiently protective (for example, plexiglas or distancing instead of face coverings for a testifying witness).
14. The county will make disposable masks available for all visitors to the courthouse who choose to wear one.

In-Person Proceeding Schedule

Section 7 of the 36th Emergency Order requires that courts may only hold in-person proceedings if they have adopted an in-person proceedings schedule for all judges.

The in-person proceeding schedule must be posted on the public website for each level of court:

- District Courts - https://www.collincountytx.gov/district_courts/Pages/default.aspx
- County Courts at Law – https://www.collincountytx.gov/county_court_law/Pages/default.aspx
- Justice Courts - https://www.collincountytx.gov/justices_peace/Pages/default.aspx

Jury Trials

All courts must follow the in-person jury proceeding requirements set forth in section 8 of the 36th Emergency Order.

The *COVID-19 Operating Plan for Resumption of Jury Trials – Collin County Court System*, effective July 1, 2020, and recertified February 22, 2021, remains in effect for jury trials in District Courts and County Courts at Law. This plan will remain published on the District Court and County Court at Law public websites:

- District Courts - https://www.collincountytx.gov/district_courts/Pages/default.aspx
- County Courts at Law – https://www.collincountytx.gov/county_court_law/Pages/default.aspx

The Justice Courts may hold in-person jury trials only if they prepare a written jury trial operating plan and publish it on their public website:

- Justice Courts - https://www.collincountytx.gov/justices_peace/Pages/default.aspx

/s/ Judge Emily Miskel

Hon. Emily Miskel
Local Administrative District Judge