

MINIMUM STANDARD HEALTH PROTOCOLS AND IN-PERSON PROCEEDING SCHEDULES OPERATING PLAN FOR THE ECTOR COUNTY JUDICIARY

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of jurors, litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the buildings housing the courts, the courts of Ector County will implement the following protective measures for in-person jury and non-jury proceedings.

The following shall constitute minimum standard health protocols and in-person proceeding schedules for in-person jury or non-jury proceedings.

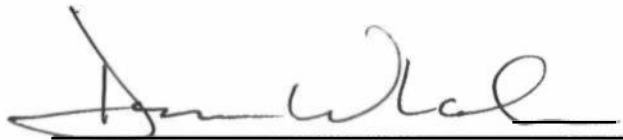
- All courts shall establish communication protocols to inquire of all court participants if they have COVID related issues, including but not limited to, symptoms of or a recent positive COVID-19 test, have been recently exposed to COVID-19, or are vulnerable to the contracting of COVID-19.
- Prospective jurors shall be summoned by utilizing a summons that includes a COVID-19 questionnaire that elicits from prospective jurors information about their exposure or vulnerability to COVID-19 and precautions that have been taken to protect the health and safety of prospective jurors.
- Upon request by a prospective juror, judges shall excuse or reschedule any prospective juror, who provides information confirming their COVID-19 infection, exposure to or their particular vulnerability to COVID-19.
- All courts shall use best efforts in the scheduling of jury trial proceedings to ensure, as best possible, appropriate social distancing.
- All courts may use the central jury room to conduct voir dire, or their respective courtrooms if appropriate social distancing can be maintained.
- All courts shall use best efforts to ensure social distancing in public common areas, galleries of courtrooms, and other locations where the public may gather.

- Frequent cleaning protocols in the courtrooms and facilities will be maintained during all in-person proceedings.
- Judges should attempt to alert parties who will not be proceeding to trial prior to the day of trial to reduce attendance at the court facility.
- It is the responsibility of each individual judge to determine if masks, face shields, or both shall be used, particularly when adequate social distancing cannot be accomplished.
- Judges shall consider on the record any objection or motions related to continuing with the jury proceeding at least seven days before the jury proceeding or as soon as practicable if the objection or motion is made or filed within seven days of the jury proceeding.

The above and foregoing shall constitute minimum standard health protocols and in-person proceeding schedules. Each individual judge may impose stricter health protocols in his or her courtroom than those required by these adopted minimum health protocols.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Signed this the 17th day of March, 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Denn Whalen", written over a horizontal line.

Denn Whalen
PRESIDING JUDGE, 70th DISTRICT COURT
LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE