

## Submission of plan/request to County Judge's Office and County Engineer

The COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Harris County Judiciary District Courts, County Courts at law, and Probate Courts was submitted and approved by Judge Susan Brown, 11<sup>th</sup> Administrative Region. The plan was developed from a comprehensive set of recommendations from the Office of Court Administration and in consultation with Harris County Department of Public Health. **See attached Operating Plan.**

The unified plan incorporates protective measures to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges and other individuals entering the Downtown Courthouses. Below are some of the highlights from the plan:

- Conducting in-person proceedings according to guidance issued by the Office of Court Administration. [See Guidance for All Court Proceedings During COVID-19 Pandemic.](#)
- All judges will continue to use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
- Social Distancing in the courtrooms, elevators, hallways, common areas
- Judges and Court Staff – Work remotely when possible, screening of staff, sneeze guards installed in the courtrooms, and providing staff with personal protective equipment.
- Hygiene - availability of hand sanitizers and tissues;
- Screeners at the entrance for each courthouse to screen individuals entering the courthouse and providing personal protective equipment as needed to individuals entering and to staff.
- Face Coverings – Courts requiring individuals to wear face coverings
- Cleaning – Sanitation team to clean the building throughout the day of the common touch points.

## **Proposed Schedules for Civil, Family, and Juvenile District Courts and County Civil and Criminal Courts at Law**

This document in in NO way intended to conflict with the COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Harris County Judiciary.

The following recommendation are predicated on an assumption that

- 1) Opening all courtrooms at 201 Caroline (Civil) and 1200 Congress (JJC);
- 2) Opening 8 misdemeanor courtrooms at 1201 Franklin (CJC);

All Courts will:

- Distribute the advisory to employees on information related to reducing the spread of COVID-19;
- Hold hearings by remote appearance whenever possible, following OCA guidelines;
- Schedule necessary in-person appearance by parties for hearings times throughout the day in order to minimize building lobby and elevator congestion between 8am and 10am;
- Waive non-attorney appearance when possible to accomplish the purpose of the hearing;
- Coordinate weekly docket days and times with adjacent courts to manage elevator and floor lobby occupancies;
- Most court divisions have the capability to accept electronic filings and will encourage parties to file paperwork electronically prior to any court settings.
- Court staff will be provided with PPE and will follow COVID 19 recommendations provided on proper hygiene techniques to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the work environment.
- Comply with courtroom occupancy and distancing restrictions outlined in the “COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Harris County Judiciary” approved by Judge Brown.
- Comply with the Harris County Fire Marshall’s Office assessment of the maximum number of person capacity for the courtrooms in each courthouse:
  - Civil Courthouse – A maximum number of 25 persons per courtroom.
  - Criminal Justice Center – A maximum number of 21 persons per courtroom.
  - Juvenile Justice Center – A maximum number of 30 persons per courtrooms. A maximum number 9 persons for detention court.

## Proposed Schedule for District Civil Courts

### **Effective June 8, 2020**

Note: Civil Courts have operated since March 16, 2020, almost exclusively without in-person hearings. For the immediate future, these courts intend to continue operating in like manner with in-person hearings being rare and exceptional. This is indicated in the schedule below as Docket Days “By Appointment Only.”

CIVIL COURT #	JUDGE	LOCATION	Docket Days
11 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Kristen Brauchle Hawkins	CC-940	By Appointment Only
55 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Latosha Payne	CC-930	By Appointment Only
61 <sup>st</sup>	Judge Fredericka Phillips	CC-903	By Appointment Only
80 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Larry Weiman	CC-910	By Appointment Only
113 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Rabeea Collier	CC-1030	By Appointment Only
125 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Kyle Carter	CC-1000	By Appointment Only
127 <sup>th</sup>	Judge R.K. Sandill	CC-1040	By Appointment Only
129 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Michael Gomez	CC-1010	By Appointment Only
133 <sup>rd</sup>	Judge Jaclanel McFarland	CC-1140	By Appointment Only
151 <sup>st</sup>	Judge Mike Engelhart	CC-1130	By Appointment Only
152 <sup>nd</sup>	Judge Robert Schaffer	CC-1110	By Appointment Only
157 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Tanya Garrison	CC-1100	By Appointment Only
164 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Alexandra Smoots-Thomas	CC-1230	By Appointment Only
165 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Ursula A. Hall	CC-1240	By Appointment Only
189 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Scot Dollinger	CC-1210	By Appointment Only
190 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Beau Miller	CC-1200	By Appointment Only
215 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Elaine H. Palmer	CC-1330	By Appointment Only
234 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Lauren Reeder	CC-1300	By Appointment Only
269 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Cory Sepolio	CC-1340	By Appointment Only
270 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Dedra Davis	CC-1410	By Appointment Only
281 <sup>st</sup>	Judge Christine Weems	CC-1440	By Appointment Only
295 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Donna Roth	CC-1430	By Appointment Only
333 <sup>rd</sup>	Judge Daryl L. Moore	CC-1430	By Appointment Only
334 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Steven Kirkland	CC-1400	By Appointment Only

## Proposed Schedules for District Family Courts

*Effective June 8, 2020*

Family Court #	Judge	Floor	Schedule
245 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Tristan H. Longino	15 <sup>th</sup>	Preferential Setting Only
246 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Angela L. Graves-Harrington	16 <sup>th</sup>	Preferential Setting Only
247 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Janice Berg	15 <sup>th</sup>	Preferential Setting Only
257 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Sandra Peake	16 <sup>th</sup>	Preferential Setting Only
308 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Gloria E. López	8 <sup>th</sup>	Preferential Setting Only
309 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Linda Marie Dunson	16 <sup>th</sup>	Preferential Setting Only
310 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Sonya L. Heath	15 <sup>th</sup>	Preferential Setting Only
311 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Germaine J. Tanner	8 <sup>th</sup>	Preferential Setting Only
312 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Clinton E. Wells, Jr.	16 <sup>th</sup>	Preferential Setting Only
507 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Julia Maldonado	15 <sup>th</sup>	Preferential Setting Only

## Juvenile Justice Center Courthouse

(201 Caroline)

Family Court #	Judge	Floor	Schedule
280 <sup>th</sup>	Judge Barbara Stalder	1st	Preferential Setting Only

Please refer to the Statement to Family Bar issued May 28, 2020.

<http://www.justex.net/Article.aspx?ArticleID=1273>

The family court judges will coordinate with each other as much as possible when scheduling in-person hearings to limit the number of people on each of the family court floors. It is anticipated that most courts will conduct docket call remotely, and not in person.

All in person hearing will be preferentially set, allowing for only one such hearing for the court at any given time.

## Proposed Schedule for County Civil Courts at Law

*Effective June 1, 2020*

- Each County Civil Court courtroom opening (4 courtrooms on the 5<sup>th</sup> Floor).
- Currently and moving forward, all cases are scheduled as remote proceedings with notice and direction to not appear at the courthouse. Judges have concerns based on historical norms that some pro se tenants in eviction proceedings will appear in-person. In-person proceedings will be limited to those pro se evictions and other cases as determined by the judge.
- In-Person proceedings will be staggered through the day. (9:00, 10:00, 11:00, 1:00, 2:00, 3:00)
- Planning for remote court trials and eventually jury trials when jurors become available.

## JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTER

### Proposed Schedules for District Juvenile Courts

*Effective June 8, 2020*

Juvenile Court #	Judge	Location	Docket Times	Docket Days
313th	Judge Natalia Oakes	5 <sup>st</sup> floor	Scheduled*	Mon - Thur
314 <sup>th</sup>	Michelle Moore	5 <sup>st</sup> floor	Scheduled*	Mon - Thur
315 <sup>th</sup>	Leah Shapiro	7 <sup>th</sup> floor	Scheduled*	Mon - Thur
Detention	<i>Judge Davis</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> floor	9:00 am	Mon & Wed
CPS	<i>Judge Katrina Griffith</i>	7 <sup>th</sup> Floor	Scheduled*	Mon - Thur

**\* Non-custody cases for disposition will be staggered by court management averaging at most two cases per hour for ALL juvenile courts.**

The Juvenile Districts Courts currently have 850 active CPS cases and 1500 pending juvenile delinquency cases.

Detention Court operates court on Monday and Wednesdays with options for discretionary detention hearings on other weekdays (on a limited basis) providing there is an available public courtroom space.

CPS matters are conducted remotely with a public courtroom (for in-person parties). The Juvenile Courts plan to continue this for CPS cases.

For non-custody delinquencies (youth + parent in person), courts will hold small dockets and stagger docket days and times among the 3 courts. The purpose is to limit public traffic in the building and elevators. Non-custody cases for disposition will be staggered by court management averaging at most two cases per hour for ALL courts.

We will utilize the 1<sup>st</sup> floor Detention Court and the public viewing area to hear some of our non-custody delinquency cases on Tuesdays, Thursdays and some on Monday and Wednesday afternoons. Once again, the purpose is to limit public traffic and maintain social distancing.

The Juvenile Courts have worked well together to stagger cases and alternate docket days to maintain social distancing to protect the staff and the public.

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE CENTER**

### **Proposed Schedules for County Criminal Courts at Law**

#### ***Effective June 1, 2020***

- Eight open operating courtrooms on floors 8-11, 2 per floor
- Two courts (suitemates) share one courtroom (each 2 days per week)
- Jail dockets every day in the open courtrooms (new arrests and the open court's cases)
- 80-90% of bond proceedings will be remote with no parties in the courtroom
- In-person bond proceedings will be limited to arraignments, necessary bond conditions, and pleas.
- In-Person proceedings will be staggered throughout the day. (10:00, 11:00, 1:00, 2:00, 3:00)
- Planning for remote court trials and eventually jury trials when jurors become available.
- All cases will be scheduled without an in-person appearance as practical.
- Plan for opening other courtrooms under the same operating conditions moving forward.