

BEST PRACTICES FOR COURTS AND STAFF

In light of the concerns raised by the rapid spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus), the Harris County District Courts are working to address and ensure the health and safety of the public, attorneys, their clients and those working in the Courthouse. These are best practices in order to give the Courts and their staff guidance on how to handle things during this time.

Courts should:

- 1) Implement in-court procedures to minimize exposure, including 6-foot distancing measures, attorneys speak from counsel table, and sanitizer readily available for all.
- 2) Ensure they have contact information (phone number, email and emergency contact email/cell number) for all staff.
- 3) Ensure that all staff that may have the need to work remotely, actually has the ability to do so.
 - a) Ability to remote access
- 4) Ensure that everyone has the number to set up conference calls and/or the information to dial in;
 - a) Allows for staff meetings to occur remotely to reduce in person meetings;
 - b) Allows for any emergency hearings to occur, if necessary.

Everyone should:

- 1) Stay home if you feel sick with symptoms consistent with COVID-19:
 - a) Symptoms can appear 2-14 days after exposure.
 - b) Symptoms include:
 1. Fever with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher
 2. Cough
 3. Shortness of breath
- 2) Be aware that transmission of the virus occurs through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes:
 - a) Between people who are in close contact with each other (within approximately six (6) feet);
 - b) Through surfaces or objects contaminated by those respiratory droplets.
- 3) Prevent the transmission of the virus by following the guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
 - a) Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (sing the alphabet song twice).
 - b) If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
 - c) Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

- d) Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately wash your hands for 20 seconds.
 - e) If you are sick, you should wear a facemask when you are around other people (e.g. sharing a room or vehicle) and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a facemask, then you should do your best to cover your coughs and sneezes and people who are caring for you should wear a facemask if they enter your room.
 - f) If you are not sick, do not need to wear a facemask unless you are caring for someone who is sick.
 - g) Avoid contact with individuals that may have been exposed to the virus.
 - h) Limit all nonessential travel to locations with established widespread community spread which currently includes China, South Korea, Italy and Iran. Please go to the cdc.gov website for updates on this.
- 4) If you think you have been exposed, please contact the Harris County Public Health Task Force Employee Hotline number at (713)274-3880 or by email at PHTaskForce@eng.hctx.net to obtain additional information related to self-quarantine procedures, including protocol(s) for verification.