

**25<sup>th</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT**  
**Court Rules and Regulations to Apply During COVID-19 Pandemic**

**I. MANAGEMENT OF ENTRY INTO THE BUILDING**

- Personnel will be stationed at the front door to check-in persons appearing for court. Persons will be asked to provide a cell number so they can be called when it is their time to enter the building. Persons will be asked to remain in their vehicles until they are called. No gatherings will be permitted outside the building or in the parking lot.
- During the sign up, people shall maintain a social distance of at least 6 feet between persons (herein after referred to as social distancing).
- Security officers will be administering a questionnaire of health questions suggested by the CDC to all persons and if any answers to said health questions are a yes, the person's case will be reset.
- When thermometers are available, temperatures will be taken by security officers using a touchless thermometer of all persons coming in the building. If the temperature reading is over 100.4, per CDC guidelines, said person will not be allowed in the building.
- All persons once in the building shall continue social distancing in all areas of the building including courtrooms. Once in the building, persons will remain in the building until their presence is no longer needed. Persons who exit the building will not be allowed to return without the express permission of the court.
- Per the Supreme Court order of April 24, 2020, the use of personal protection (face masks) is encouraged to protect court personnel and the public. Masks shall be required to be worn at all times, when social distancing cannot be maintained, per CDC guidelines.
- Hand sanitizer, when available, will be provided at the entrance of the building.
- The building including the courtrooms will be disinfected on a regular basis.
- Security will be instructed to limit access to the courtroom to only those who have cases pending on that particular day.
- The Clerks of the Courts will provide to entrance security the dockets for each court to confirm the necessity of a person appearing in court and to

instruct the litigants as to the safety protocols implemented for the management of each court's docket.

- The use of personal protection, such as face masks, gloves or other protective gear, is encouraged to be worn by the public, and when available, masks will be worn by county employees in the public areas.
- Other screening measures, subject to availability, are encouraged along with any other relevant questions or devices to promote public safety. Each county will use reasonable efforts to sanitize courtrooms and public use areas between dockets and cases throughout the day.

## **II. MANAGEMENT OF COURT DOCKET WITH REQUIRED SAFETY PROCEDURES**

- All persons who have business with the Courts shall follow the rules and guidelines concerning social distancing of at least 6 feet between people when on the grounds of the courthouse or the criminal justice center.
- All Clerks & Masters, Clerks, Magistrates and Referees in the 25<sup>th</sup> Judicial District are presently conducting their duties and following social distancing guidelines. The Clerks & Masters, Clerks, Magistrates and Referees shall continue to follow their present procedures in the management of their offices and shall follow the same guidelines set herein below as the Chancellors and Judges in conducting any hearings.
- The Courts will conduct as much business as is practical by means other than in-person and will continue utilizing conferencing and other means that minimize in-person contact. Matters such as discovery hearings, status conferences, etc., will be held, if practical, by video conferencing and conference calls.
- Understanding the Tennessee Supreme Court's directive to use means other than in-person proceedings when possible and guided by the need to promote public safety, the Chancellors and Judges will determine what matters will be heard by video conferencing or conference call and what matters require an in-person hearing.

- Court cases and hearing times that require in-person appearance will be staggered throughout the day to avoid a congestion of cases and people in the courthouse.
- One case will be allowed in the courtroom at a time. The parties and the attorneys involved with that one hearing will only be allowed in the courtroom.
- All other litigants will remain outside the building until their case is heard or further directed by the Court.
- The only persons who will be present during the in-person hearings are the Chancellor or Judge with assistant as needed, the Clerk & Master or Clerk (or designee), the Bailiff, the attorneys, the parties and a court reporter (if necessary).
- The number of people in any courtroom at any one time will be limited to ten, plus the Judge, court personnel and security.
- Attorneys will provide a list of witnesses to security to confirm the need for admittance into the facility. Attorneys will maintain social distancing or wear masks when meeting with witnesses or clients while in the building.
- Individual witnesses who are not parties will be in the courtroom only when they are called to testify and must leave immediately when their testimony is concluded. Social distancing guidelines will be followed during in-person proceedings.

The municipal Judges within our district have not submitted a plan and will continue to operate under the March 25, 2020 order of the Supreme Court until further notice.

It is the responsibility of each judge to enforce these minimum requirements and to ensure that these guidelines have been followed. Chancellors and Judges will continue to use their discretion to provide additional

safety measures on a case to case basis depending upon the facilities used and circumstances that may be presented.

Respectfully submitted this 4th day of May, 2020.

**Chancellor Martha B. Brasfield**, 25<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

**Chancellor William C. Cole**, 25<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

**Circuit Judge Joe H. Walker, III**, 25<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

**Circuit Judge J. Weber McCraw**, 25<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, Presiding Judge

**Judge Janice C. Craig**, Lauderdale County General Sessions Court Judge

**Judge Rachel J. Jackson**, Lauderdale County Probate and Juvenile Court Judge

**Judge William A. Peeler**, Tipton County General Sessions and Juvenile Court Judge

**Judge James P. Gallagher**, Fayette County General Sessions and Juvenile Court Judge

**Judge W. Boyette Denton**, Hardeman County General Sessions and Juvenile Court Judge

**Judge Van D. McMahan**, McNairy County General Sessions and Juvenile Court Judge