



BY ORDER OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE OF FORT BEND COUNTY:

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FORTY-NINTH EMERGENCY ORDER REGARDING THE COVID-19 STATE OF DISASTER, AND PURSUANT TO SECTION 22.0035(b) OF THE TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE, IT IS ORDERED THAT:

Pursuant to the Supreme Court Order Forty-Ninth, issued April 1, 2022, The OCA's Best Practices Guidelines issued March 17, 2021, Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Local Guidance from Fort Bend County Health and Human Services, and subject to Constitutional limitations:

This Order modifies previously adopted local plans and extends the Minimum Standard Health Protocols in place. In-person proceedings are allowed when the Minimum Standard Health Protocols are followed. All courts will have the authority to modify or suspend any and all deadlines and procedures for a stated period in alignment with future Supreme Court orders until further notice.

Appropriate Face covering is defined as:

- *Medical procedure masks;
- *Masks made with tightly woven fabrics (cotton and / or cotton blends);
- *A piece of fabric fashioned to fit snugly upon the face, covering the mouth and the nose of the wearer;
- *Any mask must be sufficient to snugly cover the mouth and nose of the wearer.

ALL PERSONS upon entering Fort Bend County Justice Center, or **ANY** facility under the Jurisdiction of this Local Administrative Order, including all Justice of The Peace Courts, **are encouraged but not required** to wear appropriate face coverings. **All persons entering the building may choose to mask at any time.**

ANY PERSON with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask.

ALL PROSPECTIVE JURORS AND PARTIES IN ATTENDANCE for jury selection are required to wear a mask or face covering during the selection process in the Jury Assembly Room and Jury Room #2 until the requisite number of jurors and alternate panel members are selected, seated, and sworn in.

ALL FORT BEND COUNTY COURTS shall act in ALL cases, and to avoid risk to staff, parties, attorneys, jurors, and the public **may exercise discretion** in requiring the wearing of masks / face coverings

that provide coverage of the nose and mouth of ALL persons within their Courtrooms and facilities, except within the Judge's private chambers.

ALL COURTS shall ensure that hand sanitizer is readily available for visitors, jurors and staff.

ALL FORT BEND COUNTY COURTS shall, or may require any person involved in a proceeding to participate remotely, by teleconference, video conference, or other means;

Without a participant's consent, require or allow remote hearings, consider sworn statements made out of court or sworn testimony given remotely, conduct proceedings away from the court, require participants to provide certain COVID-related information to the court, **and take any other reasonable action to avoid exposing court proceedings and participants to the threat of COVID-19;**

Require every participant in a proceeding to alert the court if the participant has, or knows of another participant who has:

- (i) COVID-19 or 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
- (ii) (ii) recently been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19 or exhibiting the symptoms described above;

Modify certain procedures and deadlines in CPS cases for certain stated periods of time;

Require remote jury trials without consent, except in jailable criminal cases where consent is required;

Vulnerable individuals, including those over age sixty-five, and individuals with serious underlying conditions (such as: hypertension, lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, those immune compromised person), can request accommodations to reduce their appearances in the courthouse.

This Order conforms to and adopts the protocols and procedures, as Ordered by the Forty-Ninth Emergency Order regarding the COVID -19 State of Disaster, and pursuant to section 22.0035(b) of the Texas Government Code.

Ordered and Adjudged on this 20th Day of April, 2022.

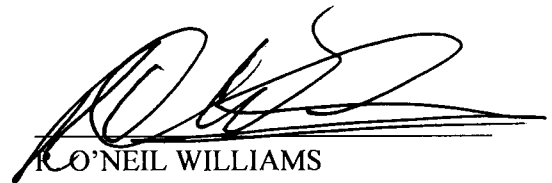
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Randy Mc Lane White

CLERK DISTRICT COURT
FORT BEND COUNTY, TX

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RO'NEIL WILLIAMS
Local Administrative Judge
268th Judicial District Judge
Richmond, Fort Bend County Texas

