



El Paso County Council of Judges
Post-COVID 19 Court Operations Advisory
Amended May 30, 2023

On January 27, 2023, the Texas Supreme Court issued its final General Emergency Order Regarding the COVID-19 State of Disaster. On May 11, 2021, the Center for Disease Control ended the federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency declaration. The El Paso Council of Judges has been operating under those administrative and health directives. For these reasons, with the assistance of local health officials, the El Paso Council of Judges is providing this update to advise on current court operations. Court operations shall align with current CDC data, health advisories and policy changes.

During the pandemic, Courts modified their processes and procedures so business could be conducted while users remained socially distant. Covid-era operational and procedural changes increased efficiency, convenience, participation, and accessibility. While these new ways of doing business benefitted courts, attorneys, and self-represented litigants, not all court users have the same level of access or desire for technology-based solutions. The COJ is committed to ensuring the needs of all users of our Courts are met; we shall be thoughtful and creative in crafting solutions that meet the unique needs of all users.

Remote and In-Person Proceedings

Subject to the current relevant provisions of the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, the Texas Rules of Criminal Procedure, directives from the Texas Supreme Court, and the El Paso County Local Rules, all El Paso County Courts at Law, District Courts, associate courts, and magistrates will hold proceedings either in-person in the courtroom or via teleconferencing, at the discretion of the judge. A party may object to any method of appearance stating good cause for the objection. The court must rule on the objection but is not required to conduct a hearing on the objection.

All lawyers, parties and participants in a teleconferenced proceeding must have fully functional devices, to include a working camera, audio, and a strong internet connection. When appearing in a teleconferenced proceeding, all expectations of appropriate court decorum must be adhered to.

Public Health

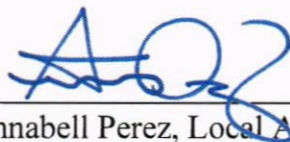
Persons who are sick with a contagious illness, should avoid coming to the courthouse. People who are at high risk should take reasonable precautions when required to come to the courthouse for a court proceeding.

The use of a face covering such as a mask or face shield is no longer *required* in courtrooms and public areas of court spaces. Use of face coverings is *encouraged* for persons who:

- a. are at high risk due to a medical condition, or
- b. have recently tested positive for COVID-19, or are exposed to someone with COVID-19.

Anyone who feels more comfortable wearing a mask in the courthouse or other court building is encouraged to do so.

SIGNED this the 30th of May, 2023



Hon. Annabell Perez, Local Administrative Judge
El Paso Council of Judges



Hon. M. Sue Kurita
El Paso County Courts Presiding Judge