One County's Experience with Jury Trials During COVID

WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TEXAS

Key to Successful Jury Trials

- "Rebuilding" of the Jury Process
- Consultation
- Communication
- Flexibility

eRespons

Dear Prospective Juror,

You have received a summons to serve as a juror in Williamson County. Jurors serve a crucial role in our justice system, deciding on issues that impact public safety, private property, and family disputes. Your service is as important now as it has ever been, perhaps even more-so during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Home

We recognize that receiving a summons for jury service during a global pandemic may create anxiety, and we understand that not everyone is equally capable of serving. If you or someone close to you is at high risk or there is some other pandemic or health-related reason why you cannot serve as a juror at this time, we understand. You will be excused from service. For those of you who are able and willing to serve, we greatly appreciate your service.

Williamson County has implemented significant preventative measures to enhance the safety of participating in trials. We will provide masks and gloves upon request. We are enforcing CDC safety guidelines, and we request that all persons coming to the justice center bring and wear a mask. Details about the safety measures being taken at the Justice Center may be found at www.wilco.org/justicecenteroperations.

We wish you the best, and hope to have a chance to see you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Betsy Lambeth Judge, 425th District Court Local Administrative District Judge, Lisa David Williamson County District Clerk



























Consultation



THE LOCAL HEALTH AUTHORITY, OUR NEW BFF



STAKEHOLDERS



PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Communication

- Plans, revised plans, and more revised plans
- Talking to Venirepersons and Jurors
- A 'final pretrial' that is more than just motions

Second Revised COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Williamson County Justice Center

Third Revised COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Williamson County Justice Center

Fourth Revised COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Williamson County Justice Center

Attachment A

Jury Trial Plan

Jury Trial Schedule

Judges have adopted the below Jury Trial Rotation Schedule. It is designed to allow for social distancing. Judges may trade trial weeks as needed for the orderly management of their dockets. This schedule will be revisited in December 2021 to determine whether it remains necessary but is provided through May 2022 for the control of the control of their dockets.

Specific Health Precautions Related to Jury Proceedings

August
8/2/21
277th
425th
CCL3

8/9/21: 368th CCL1 CCL4

8/16/2

- a) All health precautions included in the Operating Plan apply to Jury Proceedings.
- b) Parties, counsel, and trial participants required to self-monitor COVID symptoms and exposure, and to communicate any COVID exposure or symptoms to the Court. Individuals who are not able to participate in a jury proceeding due to display of COVID-symptoms, exposure, or positive test may participate via remote technology, if permissible.
- c) If, during a Jury Proceeding, a participant tests positive for COVID or reports a COVID-19 exposure, the Judge presiding over the trial should consult with the Local Health Authority and notify the Local Administrative District Judge and the Director of District Court Administration to coordinate in-depth facility cleaning.

Jury Selection

- a) Jury Selection for District Court felony cases will take place at the Georgetown Annex 2nd Floor Training Room on the Friday before the trial week.
- b) Jury Selection for District Court civil and family cases will take place at the Williamson County Justice Center in the Jury Impaneling Room on Monday morning.
- c) Jury Selection for County Court at Law cases will take place at the Williamson County Justice Center in the Jury Impaneling Room or in a courtroom on Monday.

Flexibility

- Within the building
- With the other County stakeholders
- With the bar

The Outcome



