



EL PASO COUNTY COUNCIL OF JUDGES

STATEMENT TO EL PASO BAR ATTORNEYS **COURT RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS**

The information on the Coronavirus is changing rapidly and the situation is becoming more concerning in the State and United States. In consultation with the Texas Department of State Health Services, the Texas Office of Court Administration, the Texas Supreme Court and the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, the El Paso Council of Judges will implement the following policies. Courts should be mindful of the need to reduce the impact of the virus on parties, jurors, the public, judges, and staff.

- All non-essential (see below), in-person proceedings may pose an unnecessary or unreasonable risk to participants, court staff, or the public. Courts will re-schedule or suspend proceedings to avoid the gathering of large groups of people until at least April 1, including jury trials and large docket calls.
- Essential proceedings include, but are not limited to, criminal magistration proceedings, CPS removal hearings, temporary restraining orders / temporary injunctions, juvenile detention hearings, enforcement of child support or possession of a child hearings, family violence protective orders, and certain mental health proceedings. Please call the court coordinator to conference on any hearing you may feel is “essential.”
- At this time, criminal pleas, bond hearings and contested matters will be scheduled at the discretion of the individual courts.
- Misdemeanor courts will only be hearing previously scheduled plea hearings and cases involving inmates. All other hearings in criminal misdemeanor courts will be rescheduled. If court coordinator is not available, please call County Court Administration. (915) 546-2093
- Telephone conferencing is encouraged – please contact the court coordinator to make arrangements.
- Video conferencing for remote appearance is being constructed by the County IT Department. Jail administration is also making arrangements for remote appearance by inmates. The logistical details of this option will be shared with the Bar as they develop.
- All persons with COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms, a fever, or who are coughing or sneezing, should avoid attending court, if possible, and should contact the court before appearing. Attorneys, clients, witnesses, or others who have such a condition should alert the court in advance. The court will make reasonable accommodations, including rescheduling appearances and hearings as needed.



- Jurors scheduled for service during this time frame, are excused. Jurors will be rescheduled for jury service at a later date. We will provide you with any updates as they develop.
- Defendants scheduled for jury trial in the El Paso County Courts during this time frame may call their attorney to obtain a new court date. Attorneys may reschedule these court settings by telephone or by emailing the court coordinator of the respective courts.
- Witnesses subpoenaed to appear in court during this time frame are also excused until further notice. **ATTORNEYS WILL BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR NOTIFYING WITNESSES AND PARTIES OF ALL CHANGES.**
- Individual court contact information may be found at <https://epcounty.com/courts/directory.htm>.
- Additional information about your case to include new hearing date may be found at: <http://casearch.epcounty.com/PublicAccess/default.aspx>
- If court coordinator is not available for misdemeanor cases, please call County Court Administration. (915) 546-2093.

We will provide you with any updates as they develop.