

**REFUGIO COUNTY COURT**  
**INFECTIOUS DISEASE PROTOCOL**

1. **STATEMENT AND POLICY**

In response to the threat of the Coronavirus and other infectious diseases, this Court hereby implements this Infectious Disease Protocol to minimize the risk of community transmission of COVID-19. This Protocol covers persons with scheduled hearings, appearances, or trials in the Refugio County Court who have reason to believe that they, their attorney, client, or necessary witness have been **exposed to COVID-19** or are **experiencing the flu-like symptoms** (hereafter referred to as a "***Covered Person***").

**POLICY:** No person who has been exposed to COVID-19 or is experiencing flu-like symptoms may personally appear in court while this protocol is in force without prior express permission of the Court. It is the sole and exclusive obligation of each attorney or self-represented litigant to comply with this protocol.

2. **CIVIL CASES**

A ***Covered Person*** in a *civil hearing* may appear by video conference or telephonically if the Court has the availability. **Refugio County does not have installed video conference capabilities at this time.** Video conference or telephonic testimony in a bench trial requires agreement of counsel. No video conference or telephonic testimony will be permitted in jury trials except as authorized by statute. For telephonic testimony, a notary public must be physically present with the witness to identify the witness by proper and legal ID and administer the oath to the witness on the record. ***Covered Persons*** not properly sworn in this manner will not be permitted to testify.

3. **CRIMINAL CASES**

**Defendants in criminal cases must appear in person as summoned for each setting unless their appearance has been waived by signed order of the Court.** Approved forms for waivers of appearance, arraignment, and Pre-Trial hearings may be submitted to the County Clerk's Office. Any ***Covered Person*** who is a defendant in a criminal case must contact their attorney ***prior*** to their court date in order to request to be excused from court.

4. **CONTINUANCES AND ALTERNATIVES TO ORAL HEARINGS**

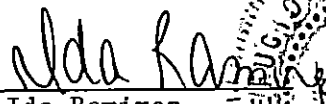
All requests for continuance under this protocol must include a certificate of conference stating the agreement or opposition of opposing counsel. The motion must state that it is asserted pursuant to the Infectious Disease Protocol, identify the Covered Person or Persons, and describe why they are necessary for the hearing in question.

**If no contested issue needs to be considered by the Court, Rule 11 Agreements should be utilized.**

5. **CONTACT INFORMATION**


Questions and requests for waiver forms should be directed to: Refugio County Clerk (361)526-2233.

ATTEST:

  
Ida Ramirez  
Refugio County Clerk  
Refugio, Texas



Signed and Effective on March 16, 2020

  
Robert Blaschke,  
Judge Presiding

**Refugio County Court**  
**Judge Robert Blaschke**

In an attempt to contain the spread of the Coronavirus, the Refugio County Court has implemented Infectious Disease Protocols.

If you have a scheduled court appearance and have been experiencing flu-like symptoms, you must immediately make alternative arrangements. No one who has been exposed to COVID-19 or is experiencing flu-like symptoms may attend court in person. However, please remember you and your clients cannot simply fail to appear. Advanced arrangements must be made with the Court as described in the attached Protocol.

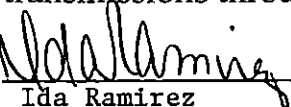
My office will continue to work with county leadership to evaluate the situation and be assured you and your client's safety is a priority. This Protocol is subject to change at any time.

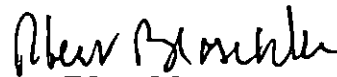
At this time, to limit the in-person contacts, County Court will be rescheduling all cases on a week to week basis. The Court will email setting notices to bondsmen and/or attorneys, and requests all parties sign such and return them to the Court. It is mandatory that the defendant sign and return the setting notice to the Court as soon as possible. With the signed setting notice returned to this Court, the Defendant and/or Attorney appearances are hereby waived.

No one should be brought to court unless a contested issue is to be presented that cannot be resolved despite diligent attempts to confer. If no contested issue needs to be addressed by the Court, then Rule 11 agreements, waivers of hearing, or passing settings should be utilized to avoid unnecessary personal appearances in court.

Thank you for your hard work and in following this protocol to minimize the risk of transmissions through the legal process.

ATTEST:

  
Ida Ramirez  
Refugio County Clerk  
Refugio, Texas

  
**Robert Blaschke,**  
**Judge Presiding**  
**Refugio County Court**

