IN THE VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

COUNTY OF WILLIAMSON

STATE OF TEXAS

GENERAL ORDER

REGARDING COURT HEARINGS IN THE VETERANS TREATMENT COURT DUE TO THE INACCESSABILITY OF THE COURTHOUSE

CAUSED BY CIRCUMSTANCES RELATED TO COVID-19

The Courts of Williamson County remain open, and this order is entered with the intent of ensuring that **veterans waiting to come into the Court and receive treatment** continue to be heard in the Veterans Treatment Court of Williamson County.

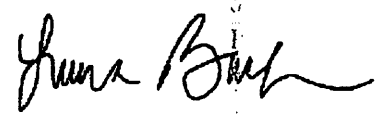
Because of the state of emergency ordered by the Governor of Texas, and in compliance with the orders of the Supreme Court of Texas, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, the Office of Court Administration, and local authorities, the Court ORDERS that, until further order, **hearings for those veterans waiting to come into the Veterans Treatment Court** is limited to the following:

- Pleas for **TRACK 1 DIVERSION** Offers **ONLY**

Additionally, because of the public health risk associated with in-person gatherings as articulated in various executive orders issued by the President, Governor, and County Judge, the court ORDERS that EFFECTIVE MONDAY, APRIL 6, 2020, hearings in the VETERANS TREATMENT COURT shall be conducted exclusively on an electronic basis, and in conformance with the "Procedure for Setting and Conducting Electronic & Telephone Court Hearings in the Veterans Treatment Court" attached as Exhibit A.

As in previously adopted orders, the Court reminds counsel that the Court takes seriously the Court's obligation to balance the interest of justice and the health and safety of the courthouse community and the community at large.

IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 3RD DAY OF APRIL, 2020



Laura Barker
Judge, County Court-at-Law 2

Filed: April 3, 2020 12:55PM
Nancy E. Rister, County Clerk
Williamson County, Texas
By: Weems, Bradley
Deputy Clerk

EXHIBIT A

PROCEDURE FOR SETTING AND CONDUCTING ELECTRONIC & TELEPHONE COURT HEARINGS IN THE VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

1. Hearings in the Veterans Treatment Court are limited to new Pleas for Track One Diversion offers Only and for our veteran participants already in the program on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month.

2. Hearings will be conducted electronically using the Microsoft Teams application. In the event a hearing or other meeting is scheduled you will receive an email with a calendar invitation to the meeting. At the appointed time, all invitees will join the meeting by selecting the link provided.

3. Counsel may access Microsoft Teams to join a meeting anytime, from any device, with or without a Microsoft Teams account. To join as a guest:
   a. You will receive an email from the Court with a link to "Join Microsoft Teams Meeting." Click on this link.
   b. It will bring you to a webpage where you can choose to "Download the Teams App" or "Join on the Web." You can choose either one.
      i. If you are on a desktop computer, "Join on the Web" is easiest. Note: You must use Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge as your web-browser to use Teams on the web.
      ii. If you are using a mobile device, downloading the Teams App is easiest.
   c. It will ask you to allow Teams to use your Audio and Video from your computer (you must have a camera and a microphone), and it will ask you to type in your name and click "Join Now."
   d. This will place you in the "Lobby" for the Videoconference to begin.
   e. The person coordinating the call will let you into the Videoconference once it begins.
   f. Please be advised that the call may be recorded by the Court or Court Staff for record purposes

4. **PROCESS FOR SETTING PLEA HEARINGS RELATED TO VETERANS COURT**
   NOTE: **AGREED DISPOSITION REQUIRED PRIOR TO REQUESTING SETTING**
   a. After an agreed disposition is reached, the state will email all required paperwork to the defense attorney, to include the Order transferring the case to CC2 (if necessary), with their signature on it.
   b. **PRIOR TO THE SCHEDULED HEARING:**
      i. Defense attorneys will go over the paperwork with the client and make sure that they have signed the paperwork and the client has signed the paperwork.
      ii. Defense attorney will then email the paperwork back to the Specialty Court Coordinator, Jo-Ell Guzman, at joell.guzman@wilco.org.
   c. Once ready to schedule a plea, the defense attorney will email Jo-Ell Guzman at jo-ell.guzman@wilco.org to ask for a setting.
   d. Ms. Guzman will schedule the hearing at an available time based on the hearing schedule set by the Judge. She will then email the Court Administrator for the Judge, Flor Salas, sending the time and date of the hearing and the plea paperwork.
   e. The Court Administrator, Flor Salas, will send a Teams Meeting at least 24 hours in advance of the setting to the following distribution list:
      i. Defense Attorney
      ii. The Client
      iii. The State
      iv. The Judge
      v. The Court Reporter

vi. The Program/Defense Attorneys for the Program
vii. The Probation Officers for the Program
viii. The Treatment Providers for the Program, to include VJO, private provider, and BBT
ix. The Mentor Coordinator for the Program, and
x. The Specialty Court Coordinator for the Court.

f. The Court Administrator will initiate the hearing as the "meeting organizer" in Teams. At the conclusion of the hearing, the judge will electronically sign the paperwork and forward to the county clerk for filing.
    i. All originals will be filed with the papers of the Court.
    ii. The clerk will email file stamped copy of judgment to the defense attorney.