

AMENDED CCCL# 4 APPEARANCE POLICY: COVID-19 Response
(Effective January 1, 2023)

Beginning January 1, 2023, Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 4 will continue to hold minimal in-person dockets and virtual court appearances in compliance with the most recent Emergency Orders issued by the Supreme Court of Texas, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, and in accordance with the guidance issued by the Office of Court Administration regarding social distancing, maximum group size, masks mandates, and other restrictions and precautions. Defendants are **ONLY** required to appear in-person for “**ESSENTIAL**” proceedings. Please refer to the Scheduling Order filed in each active case and the information provided below for more information.

A “**virtual court appearance**” means an appearance made by a party using a device capable of real-time simultaneous audio and video capabilities. Parties may participate in virtual court appearances and view a live stream of ALL proceedings on the Court’s designated channel by clicking on the following link: <https://hccocm.zoom.us/my/hccrim04>. This channel adheres to the open courts provision of the Texas Constitution. Virtual court appearances are highly encouraged, **unless** otherwise ordered by the Court.

“ESSENTIAL” PROCEEDINGS ARE SETTINGS REQUIRING THE DEFENDANT TO APPEAR IN-PERSON:

- Arraignment Settings
- Pre-Trial Motions Settings
- Pre-Trial Conference Settings
- Cases Set for Entry of a Plea
- Jury Trials
- Bail Review Hearings
- Bond Violation Hearings
- Writs of Habeas Corpus
- Contested Petitions for Non-Disclosures

“NON-ESSENTIAL” PROCEEDINGS ARE SETTINGS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE THE DEFENDANT TO APPEAR IN-PERSON:

- Non-Trial Settings
- Motions Settings
- Any other Court settings not listed above
- Court Settings listed above with prior approval from the Presiding Judge

ALL court participants will be screened in accordance with CDC Guidelines. If you are feeling sick, **DO NOT** come to the courthouse. Defendants are encouraged to contact either their Attorney of Record or the Court Coordinator to inform them of the medical condition that prevents them from appearing as required in advance of their scheduled court date to receive further instructions.

The Presiding Judge retains the authority to **require** the appearance of any defendant for any court setting in accordance with the Harris County Criminal Courts at Law Local Rules.

- **DOCKET:**
 - **Docket Begins at 9:30 a.m.**
 - **ALL MISDEMEANOR CASES:**
 - Attorneys are expected to exercise due diligence in the receipt, exchange, and review of discovery; working up cases; scheduling court appearances; and resolving party disputes **within 180 days.**

- **SCHEDULING ORDER:**
 - Effective August 1, 2023, Scheduling Orders will be filed in all new cases filed in the Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 4. This Court Appearance Policy serves as notice of the existence of said orders. All parties are required to be familiar with their assigned case Scheduling Order. The Court will process cases in accordance with the Scheduling Orders filed in each case. The Parties are required to approach the Presiding Judge with any questions or concerns.
- **COURT PLEA AGREEMENTS:**
 - If a case is to be disposed of by a plea at any of the settings, the plea will be taken at the time of, and in lieu of the events of that setting as stated in the Scheduling Order. Moreover, upon the agreement of both parties, a case may be accelerated for entry of a plea agreement. Attorneys shall have plea paperwork completed and e-filed prior to the scheduled setting. Plea Settings are “**Essential**” Settings and the Defendant is required to appear in-person.
- **STANDING DISCOVERY ORDER:**
 - Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 4 has a Standing Discovery Order that **shall** be signed by all parties and timely filed with the Court. A copy of the Court’s Standing Discovery. The order is available in the courtroom or you may obtain an electronic copy by emailing Rachel_Peres@ccl.hctx.net
- **CONTACTING THE COURT:**
 - Our clerks, coordinators, and court team members may work remotely from time to time. Access to phones and voicemail is limited. The best method of contact is through email. Staff email addresses are as follows:
 - Coordinator: Gwen_Joseph@ccl.hctx.net
 - Court Reporter: Rachel_Peres@ccl.hctx.net
 - Clerk: Anastasia.Fields@hcdistrictclerk.com
 - Due to the high volume of emails and voicemails, you may not receive an immediate response. We thank you in advance for your patience and consideration.
- **CASES RESETS**
 - Cases with an active Attorney of Record on file with the Court can initiate an Off-Docket Case Reset by using the following link:
<https://www.ccl.hctx.net/ResetForm/Default>
- **TO BE’s & ACTIVE WARRANTS:**
 - Defense Counsel can schedule a To-Be Warrant and an Active Warrant walk-thru with the Court by contacting the Court Coordinator in advance. To ensure a prompt response, an email request is preferred. To avoid *Ex Parte* Communications with the Court, please copy the State of Texas on ALL emails directed to the Court.
- **JURY TRIALS:**
 - Jury trials will be scheduled by the Presiding Judge in accordance with the dates issued by the Harris County Board of Judges.
- **MOTIONS FOR CONTINUANCE:**
 - Please refer to the Court’s Motion for Continuance Policy, which can be located in the courtroom or obtained electronically by emailing Rachel_Peres@ccl.hctx.net.

Jan. 19, 2023
Date Signed



Presiding Judge
Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 4