

RULES OF CONDUCT AND COURT DECORUM
FOR THE CITY OF LA PORTE MUNICIPAL COURT

I. AUTHORITY FOR RULES

Under the inherent power and duty of all Texas Courts as codified in **Section 21.002, Government Code**, the following Rules of Conduct and Decorum shall apply and govern any and all proceedings held before the Municipal Court of the City of La Porte, County of Harris, State of Texas.

II. FORMAL OPENING

Each session of court shall be brought to order by formal announcement by the Bailiff of the Court, requiring all to rise as the Judge takes the Bench.

III. CONDUCT REQUIRED OF ALL PERSONS WHILE ATTENDING COURT

While Court is in session there shall be:

- a. No Smoking or use of tobacco products.
- b. No chewing gum or candy.
- c. No reading newspapers or magazines.
- d. No propping of feet or sitting on tables, chairs, benches, or railings.
- e. No talking or loud noises.
- f. No food or beverages.
- g. No gestures, facial expressions, or sounds indicating approval or disapproval.
- h. No inappropriate attire including, but not limited to:
 1. Tank tops
 2. Muscle shirts
 3. Vulgar or offensive language on shirts
 4. Shorts unless part of a work uniform and otherwise appropriate
 5. Hats
- i. No video or audio recording equipment of any kind shall be turned on in the Courtroom without the prior approval of the Judge. Such equipment includes but is not limited to: still cameras, video cameras, and all audio recording devices. **NO PORTABLE PHONES MAY BE USED IN THE COURT ROOM.** Personal pagers may be used in the vibrating or silent position.
- j. No weapons are permitted except those carried or possessed by commissioned peace officers, or as needed for evidence in court.
- k. Disruptive children must remain in the lobby and must be accompanied by an adult.
- l. No backpacks, shopping bags, suitcases, extra-large purses or extra-large brief cases are permitted in the courtroom.

IV. CONDUCT REQUIRED OF COUNSEL AND PRO SE DEFENDANTS

- a. Attorneys shall observe the letter and spirit of the canons of ethics, including those concerning improper *ex parte* communications with the Judge and with those dealing with discussion of cases with representatives of the media.
- b. Attorneys shall advise their clients and witnesses of the Rules of Decorum that may be applicable.
- c. *Pro se* Defendants (defendants acting as their own defense) shall conform their behavior to all provisions applicable to Counsel.
- d. Counsel shall be dressed appropriately while in attendance of the court, unless otherwise permitted by the court.
- e. All parties shall be prompt in arriving for Court and in attending to Court business.
- f. Once a party has entered the courtroom and is appearing before the Court, he / she shall not leave without obtaining permission from the Court.
- g. All remarks of counsel to the Court shall be addressed to the Court formally.
- h. All objections, arguments and other comments shall be directed to the Judge or Jury and not to opposing counsel.
- i. In addressing the Court, Counsel shall rise and remain standing at their positions at counsel table.
- j. Counsel shall not lean on the bench, sit on the rails or tables, or appear to engage the Court in a confidential manner.
- k. The Court may enforce these rules of conduct and decorum by appropriate action or sanctions.
- l. Request for a language interpreter should be made at the time a plea is entered.
- m. Court Clerks cannot provide legal advice. Reliance upon a police officer's verbal statement(s) regarding disposition of an offense is not binding upon the court.
- n. Attorneys must remain with their client(s) until all paperwork is completed/signed.
- o. Nothing herein shall prevent or prohibit the further adoption of additional rules of decorum.

Judge Denise C. Mitrano
December 4, 2019