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PIERCE COUNTY DISTRICT COURT, STATE OF WASHINGTON

In Re

COURT OPERATIONS UNDER THE
EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES CREATED
BY PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY IN
WASHINGTON STATE

EMERGENCY GENERAL ORDER
NO. 2022-01

The health conditions that have impaired Court proceedings around the State remain. All the reasons previously stated in prior emergency orders related to the public health crisis brought on by COVID-19 issued by the Washington State Supreme Court, Pierce County District Court and various proclamations by Governor Inslee, Washington State Courts are still in the midst of a public health emergency. Specifically, the Omicron Variant of COVID-19 presents new and unresolved challenges to the general health and welfare of the citizenry and the justice system in particular. The Court has been characterized as an "essential function" by Governor Inslee.

Unlike many other agencies and organizations, Courts may compel citizens to appear in the County-City building which functions as the primary courthouse for Pierce County Superior and District Courts as well as Tacoma Municipal Court. As many as

1 four hundred jurors per week cycle through Superior Court's jury administration. In
2 addition, several hundred people work inside the County-City Building. Pierce County
3 District Court obtains jurors from Pierce County Superior Court jury administration.
4
5 Pierce County District Court, together with Pierce County Superior Court, the Office of
6 the Governor, the Pierce County Executive, the Pierce County Council, the Tacoma-
7 Pierce County Health Department, Pierce County Department of Emergency
8 Management, the Washington State Department of Health, the Washington State
9 Supreme Court as well as the Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts, has
10 worked diligently to create a safe and stable courthouse. In the continued and
11 expanding effort to reduce the incidents of close contact between employees of Pierce
12 County District Court, members of the Bar, members of the public and any other entity
13 or agency accessing the Court, the Court has implemented certain court procedures
14 that can accomplish justice without the actual presence of parties in the courtroom. The
15 use of video and audio technology has allowed for virtual hearings. Through these
16 means, the Court has effectively dispensed justice in cases not requiring juries since the
17 health emergency was declared. The expectation is that those proceedings should and
18 will continue as they have. District Court will continue to take the appropriate steps to
19 make the court a safe environment. The Court has already mandated the wearing of
20 masks.
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24 THEREFORE, pursuant to the Court's authority to administer justice and to
25 ensure the safety of court personnel, litigants, and the public,

26 IT IS HEREBY ORDERED pursuant to the authority of the Washington Supreme
27 Court Orders No.257000-B-631, No. 25700-8-626, No. 25700- B-642, and No. 25700-8-

1 646 and the authority as the Presiding Judge of Pierce County District Court, that the
2 following shall be in effect today and until further order of the Court,

3 (1) That the provisions of Pierce County General Orders 2020-02, 2020-03, 2020-
4 04, 2020-05, 2020-06, 2020-07, 2020-08, 2020-10, 2020-12, 2020-13, 2020-14,
5 2020-15, 2021-01, 2021-02 and Supreme Court Orders 25700-B606 and 25700-
6 B607 (corrected), 25700-B-618 and 25700-B-625, 25700-B-640, 25700-B- 642
7 and 25700-B-646 are hereby incorporated herein.
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9 (2) All civil and criminal jury trials are hereby suspended for the period of January 5,
10 2022 through January 21, 2022. No new criminal or civil jury trials shall be
11 started during this time frame. It is expected that on January 24, 2022, jury trials
12 will resume. The Court will re-assess the ability of the Court to resume in-person
13 jury trials prior to January 21, 2022.
14

15 (3) All civil cases will be rescheduled according to the court's availability for civil
16 trials and upon consultation with the parties.
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18 (4) All criminal cases will be continued at the regularly scheduled Readiness
19 Hearings. The increase in the spread of COVID is an unavoidable or unforeseen
20 circumstance affecting the time for trial and beyond the control of the court or the
21 parties - CrRLJ 3.3 (e)(8). Therefore, the time between the entry of this
22 Emergency Administrative Order and the next court date after January 21, 2022
23 is an excluded period for Speedy Trial Purposes. Cases will continue to be set
24 for Readiness Hearings if not resolved at the Pre-Trial Conference.
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26 (5) The Pierce County District Court Probation services are hereby modified such
27 that all in-person probation appointments will be conducted telephonically and/or
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1 through an audio/video platform. All individuals currently on probation are
2 expected to stay in contact with their probation officer and be available for
3 telephonic/video appointments as scheduled. All persons referred to probation,
4 will be directed to call 253-798-7595 within twenty-four (24) hours from referral,
5 unless that time would fall on a Saturday, Sunday or holiday, and then they must
6 call the following business day.
7

8 (6) Pierce County District Court Resource Center will be closed to the public but can
9 be contacted telephonically and appointments with Service Providers will take
10 place telephonically and/or through an audio/video platform.
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12 (7) Pierce County District Court remains open, to include the public counters located
13 at the County City Building, Room 239. The public is encouraged to
14 communicate with Pierce County District Court as follows:
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- 16 a. By Calling: 253-798-7487
- 17 b. Using live chat: <https://piercecounitywa.gov/101/District-Court>
- 18 c. By email: PCDISTCRT1@piercecounitywa.gov

19 Litigants, attorneys and the public are encouraged to visit the Pierce County
20 District Court website for updated information.

21 DATED this 5th day of January, 2022.

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26 Hon. Jeanette A. Lineberry
27 Presiding Judge
28 Pierce County District Court