

PIERCE COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT PRESS RELEASE
MARCH 17, 2020
COVID-19 Response

The Pierce County Superior Court Judges met on Tuesday, March 17, 2020 to discuss the court's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the meeting, Acting Presiding Judge Phil Sorensen was granted authority to make any necessary changes to local court rules and best practices. **The court's primary goal is to not compel anyone into our facilities, while still completing our essential functions and forwarding justice in agreed upon matters.** The court facilities at the County-City Building, Remann Hall (Juvenile Court) and Western State Hospital will remain open but there are modifications to operations which should increase the safety of court participants and staff.

Beginning March 18, 2020, the following will occur:

- Pierce County Superior Court Emergency Orders 1, 2, 3 and 4 are incorporated by reference and can be found at our website. <https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/122/Superior-Court>
- All **out of custody** criminal matters shall be continued to after April 24, 2020.
- All **in custody** criminal matters shall be continued to after April 24, 2020, with the following exceptions:
 - Scheduling of first appearances, arraignments, plea and sentencing matters.
 - Courts retain discretion in the scheduling of these matters, except that the following matters shall take priority:
 - Pretrial release motions.
 - Plea hearings and sentencing hearings that result in the anticipated release of the defendant within 30 days of the hearing.
 - Parties are not required to file motions to shorten time in scheduling any of these matters.
- Warrants may be issued for failure to appear at any criminal hearing from now through April 24, 2020.
- Felony Mental Health Court is suspended until April 13, 2020.
- Assisted Outpatient Behavioral Health Treatment Court is suspended until March 30, 2020.
- Felony Drug Court and Family Recovery Court are on recess and may continue as of March 30th. Please visit our website for further information as it becomes available.
- Two remaining trials at the County-City Building will continue until finished, which is expected in the next day or two. Social distancing measures are in place where possible.
- Superior Court Judges are encouraged to consider allowing telephonic or video appearances for scheduled criminal hearings between March 17 and through April 24, 2020.
- All civil bench trials, including family court trials, scheduled through April 24, 2020 are being held on a voluntary basis and may be held telephonically at the court's discretion.
- The court will consider and permissively grant requests to continue civil trial dates.
- All confirmed civil motions will be heard or decided without a personal appearance before the assigned judicial officer.

- Guardianship and Trust matters scheduled before a judge will be reviewed by the court. The court will notify the parties and/or counsel if a telephonic appearance will be required.
- Judicial Assistants will contact parties by telephone or email for trial assignments and mandatory court review hearings scheduled through April 24, 2020 to determine the status of the cases.
- All status conferences scheduled before a judge will be heard or decided without personal appearances before the assigned judicial officer.
- All settlement conferences scheduled with the court through April 24, 2020 are stricken. The court suspends PCLR 16(c) and PCLSPR 94.04(d).
- For protocol updates to the commissioner dockets at the County-City Building please refer to Emergency Order #4.

If you are scheduled for a court proceeding or trial date, you must call the contact who subpoenaed you, or the court, using the contact information listed below:

- If you are currently in trial or scheduled for a hearing in front of a judge, contact the judicial assistant for that department. The list of judicial assistants can be found by following this link <https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/25266/Public-Phone-List-?bidId=>.
- If you have a hearing set before the Commissioners, please contact the Commissioner Services Department at (253)798-6697.
- For all other criminal matters, contact Criminal Administration at (253)798-2988.
- For all matters at Remann Hall (Juvenile Court), please contact Juvenile Court Administration at (253)798-7900.
- For all matters at Western State Hospital, please contact the County Clerk's Office at (253)756-2951.
- Jurors assigned to a department should call the number provided by the judicial assistant.

Any changes to court hours or further limitations on proceedings will be provided in future press releases. For the latest information on court operations visit: www.piercecountywa.gov/courts.

We continue to follow guidance from Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department (TPCHD) to help protect the public's health. Employees and court participants should follow these recommendations while at the County-City Building, Remann Hall and Western State Hospital:

- Increase handwashing and use of alcohol-based sanitizer
- Respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette – cover a cough or a sneeze
- Keep distance from others (more than six feet, if possible)
- Frequently clean and disinfect surfaces
- Remain home during a respiratory illness

[Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department COVID-19](#)

Pierce County Superior Court is the second largest Superior Court in the State of Washington and is proud to serve the citizens and visitors of Pierce County. The Court is staffed with 22 Judges and 9 Commissioners. There are three sites where court is held; the County-City Building at 930 Tacoma Ave S., Tacoma, Remann Hall Juvenile Court at 5501 6th Ave., Tacoma, and Western State Hospital at 9601 Steilacoom Blvd. SW, Lakewood. For more information, please visit our website at <http://co.pierce.wa.us/superiorcourt>.

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