

PIERCE COUNTY DISTRICT COURT PRESS RELEASE
DECEMBER 10, 2020
SUSPENSION OF JURY TRIALS

The Pierce County District Court remains committed to taking important steps to protect public health while ensuring continued access to justice and essential court services during the COVID-19 pandemic. On November 23, 2020 the Court issued an order suspending all criminal and civil jury trials through January 11, 2021. District Court obtains jurors from the Pierce County Superior Court. Due in part to the Governor's extension of restricting gatherings and Superior Court's order suspending jury trials, the District Court will postpone criminal and civil jury trials until at least March 1, 2021.

The public is encouraged to communicate with Pierce County District Court as follows:

- a. By Calling: 253-798-7487
- b. Using live chat: <https://piercecountywa.gov/101/District-Court>
- c. By email: PCDISTCRT1@piercecountywa.gov

About Pierce County District Court:

Pierce County District Court is the second largest District Court in the State of Washington and is proud to serve the citizens and visitors of Pierce County. The Court is staffed with 8 Judges and 103 court and probation employees. There are two sites where court activities are held; the County-City Building at 930 Tacoma Ave S., Tacoma, and the District Court Resource Center 925 Tacoma Ave S., Tacoma. For more information, please visit our website at <https://www.piercecountywa.gov/101/District-Court>.

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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

GENERAL ORDER
NO. 2020-15

WHEREAS On February 29, 2020, Washington State Governor Jay Inslee declared a state of emergency due to the public health emergency posed by the spread of the coronavirus (COVID – 19).

WHEREAS during this state of emergency, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Washington State Department of Health have recommended increasingly stringent social distancing measures of at least six feet between people, and encouraged vulnerable individuals to avoid public spaces; and

WHEREAS consistent with these recommendations, Governor Inslee issued and extended a “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” order directing non-essential businesses to

1 close, banning public gatherings, and requiring Washingtonians to stay home except to
2 pursue essential activities; and

3 WHEREAS pursuant to this Court's prior orders as well as prior Orders by the
4 Washington State Supreme Court, this court has taken important steps to protect public
5 health while ensuring continued access to justice and essential court services, including
6 by strictly observing social distancing measures, holding proceedings remotely,
7 suspending some in-building operations, and promulgating emergency rules as
8 necessary; and
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10 WHEREAS, the response to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 must be
11 continued beyond the timeframes in this Court's orders, as well as the Orders issued by
12 the Washington State Supreme Court, while allowing the court to operate effectively and
13 maintain effective and equitable access to justice; and
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15 WHEREAS on March 19, 2020 Chief Justice Debra Stephens of the Washington
16 State Supreme Court adopted Corrected Order No. 25700-B-607, setting forth direction
17 and authority to Presiding Judges of trial courts across the State to effectively
18 administer their courts in response to this state of emergency, including the authority to
19 adopt, modify, and suspend court rules and orders as warranted to address the
20 emergency condition; and
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22 WHEREAS, there has been a recent spike in the number of COVID-19 cases in
23 Pierce County and elsewhere in the State of Washington prompting new restrictions
24 from Governor Inslee, which have now been extended again; and
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26 WHEREAS, the Superior Court for Pierce County has entered an order extending
27 the summoning on jurors until at least February 1, 2021; now
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1 THEREFORE, pursuant to the Court's authority to administer justice and to
2 ensure the safety of court personnel, litigants, and the public,

3 IT IS HEREBY ORDERED

4
5 (1) That the provisions of Pierce County General Orders 2020-02, 2020-03, 2020-
6 04, 2020-05, 2020-06, 2020-07, 2020-08, 2020-10, 2020-12 and Supreme Court
7 Orders 25700-B606 and 25700-B607 (corrected), 25700-B-618 and 25700-B-
8 625, 25700-B-640, 25700-B- 642 and 25700-B-646 are hereby incorporated
9 herein.

10 (2) All civil and criminal jury trials are hereby suspended until at least March 1, 2021.

11 (3) All civil cases will be rescheduled according to the court's availability for civil
12 trials and upon consultation with the parties.

13 (4) All criminal cases will be continued at the regularly scheduled Readiness
14 Hearings for jury trials scheduled on or before March 1, 2021. The period of time
15 between the Readiness Hearing and the next scheduled jury trial shall be an
16 excluded period pursuant to CrRLJ 3.3 as these circumstances are unavoidable,
17 unforeseen and beyond the control of the court or the parties. Cases will
18 continue to be set for Readiness Hearings if not resolved at the Pre-Trial
19 Conference.
20 Conference.

21 (5) All Readiness Hearings will be held in person, unless authorized by the Court
22 and agreed to be all parties and subject to technology availability and the court's
23 ability to reschedule in a timely fashion.
24 ability to reschedule in a timely fashion.
25 ability to reschedule in a timely fashion.

1 (6) The court is currently working to move all criminal hearings to a virtual setting.

2 As this migration to the virtual platform occurs, parties and attorneys will be
3 notified.

4 (7) All hearings that continue to be heard in person shall follow strict social
5 distancing protocols, including the requirement of all participants to wear a mask
6 (see below), maintain at least six feet social distancing and wash hands and/or
7 use hand sanitizer which is provided in every courtroom at counsel table, and
8 immediately upon entry into the courtroom.

9 (8) The manner in which a hearing will be held (in person, telephonically,
10 video/virtual, etc.) or not held will be determined by the Court with full
11 consideration of all recommended public health guidelines.

12 (9) The Pierce County District Court Probation services are hereby modified such
13 that all in-person probation appointments will be conducted telephonically and/or
14 through an audio/video platform. All individuals currently on probation are
15 expected to stay in contact with their probation officer and be available for
16 telephonic/video appointments as scheduled. All persons referred to probation,
17 will be directed to call 253-798-7595 within twenty-four (24) hours from referral,
18 unless that time would fall on a Saturday, Sunday or holiday, and then they must
19 call the following business day.

20 (10) Litigants and attorneys who feel sick or who have been in contact with
21 anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 should not enter Pierce County District Court.
22 Anyone deemed by the court or by court staff to exhibit illness symptoms may be
23 ordered to leave.

