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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. 2020-12
SOCIAL DISTANCING AND FACIAL
COVERINGS IN COURTROOM

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 on March 4, 2020 Chief Justice Debra Stephens of the Washington State Supreme Court adopted Order No. 25700-B-602 granting emergency authority to the Presiding Judges of Washington courts to adopt, modify, and/or suspend court rules and orders, and to take further actions concerning court operations, as warranted to address the current public health emergency; and

WHEREAS Pierce County is currently in Phase 2 of the Safe Start plan, which among other things directs that individuals shall not gather with more than 5 people outside the persons' household; and

1 WHEREAS on May 29, 2020 Chief Justice Debra Stephens of the Washington
2 State Supreme Court adopted Order No. 25700-B-626, Amended Third Revised and
3 Extended Order Regarding Court Operations, acknowledging the need for increasingly
4 stringent social distancing measures or at least six feet between people and
5 encouraged vulnerable individuals to avoid public places. While also acknowledging that
6 Court are essential to our justice system; AND

8 WHEREAS this court is in balancing the need to do its part to protect public
9 safety while at the same time conducting essential court operations; AND

11 WHEREAS in following the most protective public health guidance based on
12 current guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and the Washington
13 Department of Health;

14 NOW THEREFORE, it is hereby

15 ORDERED that all previous emergency administrative Orders remain in full
16 effect. It is further

18 ORDERED that anyone who feels sick or is in quarantine shall not enter the
19 Pierce County District Court. Anyone deemed by court personnel to be exhibiting
20 illness symptoms may be directed to leave. It is further

21 ORDERED that social distancing measures of at least six feet between people
22 will be strictly enforced to the greatest extent possible in Pierce County District Court.
23 Anyone failing to abide by social distancing measures may be ordered by authorized
24 personnel to leave the building. It is further

1 ORDERED that, in order to help stop the spread of COVID-19, every person
2 entering a courtroom shall wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer supplied at the
3 entrance of each courtroom. It is further

4
5 ORDERED that every person entering a courtroom shall be seated in an empty
6 social distanced location as soon as is possible and shall sit in designated seating only.
7 If courtroom seating capacity is reached, admittance to the courtroom is closed until
8 additional seating capacity becomes available. Individuals waiting to enter a courtroom
9 shall maintain at least six-foot social distancing in the hallways until called to enter the
10 courtroom. Courtroom seating capacity will be strictly enforced. It is further

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12 ORDERED that due to limited seating capacity in each courtroom, preferred
13 seating may be provided to attorneys, parties, alleged victims, advocates and witnesses
14 at the discretion of the judge in the particular courtroom. It is further

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16 ORDERED that in order to provide access to each courtroom where space may
17 be limited, court proceedings will be livestreamed and accessible from the District
18 Court's website: <https://piercecountywa.gov/101/District-Court>.

19 It is further

20 ORDERED that facial coverings are required in every courtroom; facial coverings
21 are available in each courtroom. Exceptions for the facial covering exception are
22 children under the age of 2, any person who has a physical disability that prevents
23 easily wearing or removing a facial covering, any person who relies on language cues
24 such as facial markers and expression and mouth movements as art of communication,
25 and anyone who has been advised by a medical professional that wearing a facial
26 covering may pose a risk to that individual for health-related reasons. It is further

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28 GENERAL ORDER 2020-11 - 3

