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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

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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.

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

14            (4) All criminal cases will be continued at the regularly scheduled Readiness  
15            Hearings for jury trials scheduled on or before March 1, 2021. The period of time  
16            between the Readiness Hearing and the next scheduled jury trial shall be an  
17            excluded period pursuant to CrRLJ 3.3 as these circumstances are unavoidable,  
18            unforeseen and beyond the control of the court or the parties. Cases will  
19            continue to be set for Readiness Hearings if not resolved at the Pre-Trial  
20            Conference.  
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22            (5) All Readiness Hearings will be held in person, unless authorized by the Court  
23            and agreed to be all parties and subject to technology availability and the court's  
24            ability to reschedule in a timely fashion.  
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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.

1 (11) Litigants and attorneys who appear in Pierce County District Court are  
2 expected to adhere to the six-foot social distancing requirement from court staff  
3 as well as other litigants and attorneys or members of the public. All members of  
4 the public are expected to comply with facial covering requirements set forth in  
5 General Order 2020-12.  
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7 (12) Pierce County District Court remains open. The public is encouraged to  
8 communicate with Pierce County District Court as follows:

9 a. By Calling: 253-798-7487

10 b. Using live chat: <https://piercecountywa.gov/101/District-Court>

11 c. By email: [PCDISTCRT1@piercecountywa.gov](mailto:PCDISTCRT1@piercecountywa.gov)

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

15 DATED this 10th day of December, 2020.  
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19 /s/ Judy Rae Jasprica  
20 Judy Rae Jasprica, Presiding Judge  
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