1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7	PIERCE COUNTY DISTRICT COURT, STATE OF WASHINGTON	
8	In Re	
9		ENERAL ORDER
10	BY PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY IN	D. 2020-05
11	WASHINGTON STATE	
12 13		
13	WHEREAS On February 29, 2020, Washington State Governor Jay Inslee	
15	declared a state of emergency due to the public health emergency posed by the spread	
16	of the coronavirus (COVID – 19).	
17 18	WHEREAS on March 16, 2020 this Court issued emergency General Orders	
19	2020-02 and 2020-03 based on the March 4, 2020 Order No. 25700-B-602 from Chief	
20	Justice Debra Stephens of the Washington State Supreme Court authorizing Presiding	
21	Judges to adopt, modify and suspend court rules and orders and to take further actions	
22	concerning court operations, as warranted to address the current public health	
23	emergency; and	
24	WHEREAS on March 19, 2020 Chief Justice Debra Stephens of the Washington	
25 26	State Supreme Court adopted Corrected Order No. 25700-B-607, setting forth direction	
20	and authority to Presiding Judges of trial courts across the State to effectively	
28		
	COVID-19 COURT CLOSURE ORDER - 1	

administer their courts in response to this state of emergency, including the authority to adopt, modify, and suspend court rules and orders as warranted to address the emergency conditions; and

WHEREAS on March 25, 2020 the Governor issued Proclamation 20-25 which described the current state of the pandemic and the threat of community transmission and directed that "all people in Washington State are immediately prohibited from leaving their home or place of residence except to conduct or participate in (1) essential activities, and/or (2) employment in providing essential business services". The proclamation mandates that essential businesses such as the Court are prohibited from operating unless they establish and implement social distancing and sanitation measures established by the United States Dept. of Labor's guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19 and the Washington State Dept. of Health Workplace and Employer Resources & Recommendation; and

WHEREAS in response to the Governor's order, the majority of court staff are working remotely from home, with only minimal staff on site; and

WHEREAS Chief Justice Stephens' General Order No. 25700-B-607 requires that all matters conducted by the Court during this time period "must be heard by telephone, video, or other means that do not require in-person attendance, unless impossible. Where court matters must be heard in person, social distancing and other public health measures must be strictly observed." That Order further recognizes that "[n]othing in this order limits the authority of courts to adopt measures to protect health and safety that are more restrictive than this order, as circumstances warrant";

COVID-19 COURT CLOSURE ORDER - 2

THEREFORE, pursuant to the Chief Justice Stephens' General Order No. 25700-B-607 and upon this Court's authority to administer justice and to ensure the safety of court personnel, litigants, and the public,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED

(1) That a compelling interest in the health and safety of court personnel, litigants and the public require that the Court take such measures as to conduct some future court hearings via audio and/or video virtual court to limit physical interaction with the parties, the public and court staff; and

(2) That notice of all such hearings shall be placed on the individual Courtroom door and that notice be provided on the Court's website. This notice shall instruct parties and members of the public how to access such hearings; and

(3) The Court has weighed the importance of open proceedings against the present health risks, and has determined that it is appropriate to defer to the guidance of public health experts during this pandemic. The risk of further spread of COVID-19 outweighs the interests of the public to be physically present in open courts; and

(4) This Order does not apply to jury trials. Hearings deemed necessary will be determined by judicial discretion to include infractions, therapeutic court and criminal plea hearings, as well as civil matters as determined by the Court.
Dated this 29<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2020.

<u>/s/ Judy Rae Jasprica</u> Judy Rae Jasprica, Presiding Judge

COVID-19 COURT CLOSURE ORDER - 3