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IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF WASHINGTON
IN AND FOR GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY

IN THE MATTER OF EMERGENCY
RESPONSE TO A THREAT TO PUBLIC
HEALTH

GENERAL ORDER 2021-8
ORDER SUSPENDING
IN-PERSON HEARINGS

WHEREAS, a state of emergency has existed in the State of Washington due to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak in Washington at all times since February 29, 2020; and

Pursuant to General Rule (GR) 21(a), the Presiding Judge of this court has issued several orders to address the impact of this emergency upon the safety and health of court staff, employees of the court, litigants, attorneys and members of the public.

This order adopts and incorporates prior orders of this court, except as amended herein, and the Washington Supreme Court orders issued on this same subject.

The COVID-19 infection rate in Grays Harbor County is currently at its highest level than at any time since the beginning of this pandemic. During most of 2020, the infection rate in Grays Harbor County was in a range of 100-300 new cases per 100,000 population every two weeks. The National Center for Disease Control (CDC) considers an infection rate of 25 new cases every two weeks per 100,000 population to be manageable or acceptable. The highest infection rate in 2021, until recently, was 337 new cases for the two-week period ending May 19, 2021. The infection rate in Grays Harbor County for the two-week period ending August 20, 2021 is 467 new cases, nearly 19 times greater than the standard considered acceptable by the CDC.

This unprecedented rise in the infection rate is occurring primarily among the unvaccinated population within our County. **Less than 50% of the population of Grays Harbor County is fully vaccinated at this time, which creates an unsafe and unreasonable risk for all persons employed within the Grays Harbor County courthouse and other related court facilities, and for all persons who enter such buildings or facilities.**

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3 THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the Grays Harbor County Superior Court and the
4 Grays Harbor County Juvenile Court shall be closed to the public effective September 1, 2021, except for
5 the limited circumstances specified in this order. The closure of these courts does not apply to the Grays
6 Harbor District Courts. Some operations of the Grays Harbor County Superior Court are suspended, as set
7 forth in this order, and many operations of the Court shall be conducted remotely by use of the Zoom
8 platform.

7 **Criminal Cases**

8 1. Criminal jury trials shall be scheduled and conducted at the Satsop Business Park in the courtrooms
9 assembled at that site. The courtrooms at that site provide sufficient space so as to allow adequate
10 social distancing and other safety and health measures to minimize the risk of infection for persons
11 entering those courtrooms.

12 2. Nonjury trials may be conducted by remote means effective immediately.

13 3. The court shall continue to conduct its regular criminal motion dockets by Zoom until further order
14 of this court. As provided in section 12(c) of the Supreme Court order dated October 13, 2020,
15 defense counsel shall be responsible for providing notice to defendants of all hearing dates, docket
16 dates and the need for defendants to appear for all hearings and dockets remotely (using Zoom). Any
17 defendant who lacks access to a device that supports Zoom may appear for the motion dockets in-
18 person in Grays Harbor County Superior Court, Department 2 courtroom, where access to Zoom will
19 be available.

20 4. The cases for out-of-custody defendants who are scheduled to plead guilty or for sentencing shall
21 be heard in-person.

22 5. The cases for in-custody defendants who are scheduled to plead guilty or for sentencing, shall be
23 heard in-person or by Zoom at the jail, at the option of the defendant's attorney. The defendant's
24 attorney shall be responsible for: (a) preparing all plea agreements and statements on plea of guilty
25 and providing signed bench copies to the court prior to the date of the hearing; and (b) notifying the
26 Corrections Department as to the location (in-person or Zoom) for all cases scheduled for guilty pleas
or sentencing.

6. All Drug Court proceedings shall be conducted remotely (using Zoom).

1 **Civil Cases**

2 1. All motions in civil matters shall be scheduled for remote hearing only (using Zoom) beginning at
3 8:30 a.m. on Mondays.

4 2. All civil jury trials scheduled to begin between the date of this order and June 1, 2022 are hereby
5 stricken and counsel shall submit a new request for trial with the Court Administrator on or after
6 February 1, 2022.

7 3. Evidentiary hearings or non-jury civil trials shall be conducted remotely (using Zoom).

8 **Domestic/Family Law Cases**

9 1. All motions in domestic and family law cases shall be scheduled for remote hearing only (using
10 Zoom) beginning at 9:00 a.m. on Mondays.

11 2. Evidentiary hearings or non-jury civil trials shall be conducted remotely (using Zoom).

12 3. Default Dissolution dockets shall be suspended until further order of this court.

13 4. Paternity Dockets shall be conducted remotely.

14 5. Protection Dockets for domestic violence protection orders shall be conducted remotely (using
15 Zoom) on Mondays at 2:00 p.m.

16 **Dependency and Juvenile Court**

17 1. Juvenile Criminal dockets shall be conducted remotely until further order of this court. Defense
18 counsel shall be responsible for providing notice to defendants/respondents of all hearing dates,
19 docket dates and the need to appear for all hearings and dockets remotely (using Zoom). Any
20 defendant/respondent who lacks access to a device that supports Zoom may appear for the motion
21 dockets in-person at the Grays Harbor County Juvenile Court, where access to Zoom will be
22 available.

23 2. Dependency motion dockets shall be heard remotely (using Zoom) on Wednesdays beginning at
24 9:00 a.m. Fact-finding hearings for contested dependency and parental termination cases shall be
25 heard remotely (using Zoom).

26 3. Family Recovery Court proceedings shall be conducted remotely (using Zoom).

1 **ITA Court**

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3 All ITA Court proceedings shall be conducted remotely (using Zoom).

4 **Ex Parte Orders**

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6 Ex Parte matters may be submitted electronically to the Court Administrator for presentation to a
7 judge or court commissioner. To facilitate this, email your motion and order with the subject matter
8 “EX PARTE” to scbenchcopies@co.grays-harbor.wa.us. In most instances, upon judges’ signature,
9 the order will be returned to the party via email and require the party to print the order along with
10 their motion and file with the Court Clerk’s Office as soon as possible.

11 **Office Operations**

12 Clerks Office: Public hours will be limited to Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
13 Staff will be available by email or phone from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

14 Court Administration: Office closed to the public. Office staff may be contacted by email or
15 phone from 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

16 **This order is effective beginning September 1, 2021 and shall remain in effect until
17 further order of this court.**

18 Court Security personnel shall screen all persons entering the courthouse to determine if such person
19 has legitimate business to conduct in the courthouse as specified in this order. Security Personnel shall
20 have the authority to deny any person access to the courthouse.

21 DATED this 24th day of August, 2021.

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23 _____
24 DAVID L. EDWARDS
25 PRESIDING JUDGE
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