Data Dissemination Policy

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I. AUTHORITY AND SCOPE

A. ~~These policies govern~~This policy governs the release of information ~~in~~ from the case management systems that the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) maintains, such as the Judicial Information System (JIS), the Superior Court Management Information System (SCOMIS), the Appellate Court System (ACORDS) and Odyssey, as well as data collected by AOC from other court case management systems~~-~~. The policy has been approved ~~and are promulgated~~ by the Judicial Information Sysem Committee (JIS Committee), pursuant to JISCR 12 and 15(d)~~. They~~ , and ~~apply~~ applies to all requests for computer-based court information subject to JISCR 15.

B. ~~These policies are to~~This policy is to be administered in the context of the requirement of Article I, § 10 of the Constitution of the State of Washington that "Justice in all cases shall be administered openly, and without unnecessary delay," as well as the privacy protections of Article I, § 7, and GR 31.

C. ~~These policies do~~This policy does not apply to requests initiated by or with the consent of the ~~Administrator for the Courts~~State Court Administrator or his/her ~~for~~designee for the purpose of answering a request vital to the internal business of the courts. See JISCR 15(a).

D. This policy does not apply to documents filed with the local courts and county clerk's offices.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. "JIS" is the acronym for "Judicial Information System" and as used in this policy represents all the case management systems that the AOC currently maintains.

B. ~~Records~~ "JIS record" is an electronic representation of information stored within, or derived from the case management systems that the AOC maintains. It is programmed to be available in human readable and retrievable form.

~~1. "**JIS record**" is an electronic representation (bits/bytes) of information either stored within, derived from, or accessed from the OAC. *(Amended February 27, 1998.)*~~

~~"**JIS legal record**" is a JIS record that is the electronic duplication of the journal of proceedings or other case-related information which it is the duty of the court clerk to keep, and which is programmed to be available in human readable and retrievable form. Case information reflecting the official legal file and displayed by JIS programs are JIS legal records.~~

C. JIS Reports

1. "**JIS ~~reports~~reports**" are the results of special programs written to retrieve and manipulate JIS records into a ~~human~~ readable form~~, other than the JIS legal record~~. It includes, but is not limited to, compiled reports, index reports, compiled aggregate numbers, and statistics.
2. "**Compiled reports**" are based on information related to more than one case or more than one court. As used in this policy, "compiled reports" do not include index reports.
3. **"Index reports"** are reports containing bulk court data with set data elements**.**
4. **"Compiled aggregate numbers"** are JIS reports containing only total numerical quantities without case level data elements.
5. **"Routine summary reports"** are JIS reports automatically generated by courts, county clerk's offices, or the AOC during the scope of daily business.

D. Data Dissemination Management

1. "**Data dissemination**" is the reporting or other release of information derived from JIS records.
2. ~~The~~ "**~~data~~ Data dissemination ~~manager~~administrator**" is the individual designated within the ~~Office of the Administrator for~~Administrative Office of the Courts and within each individual court or county clerk's office and assigned the responsibility for administration of data dissemination, including responding to requests of the public, other governmental agencies, or other participants in the judicial information system. Courts and county clerk's offices may use multiple staff to satisfy this role.~~The name and title of the current data dissemination manager for each court and the Office of the Administrator for~~Administrative the Courts shall be kept on file with the Office of the Administrator for the Courts.~~

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E. ~~**Electronic**~~ **Data Dissemination Contract**

The "~~**electronic**~~ **data dissemination contract"** is an agreement between ~~the~~ a county clerk's office, a Washington state court or the ~~Office of the Administrator for~~Administrative Office of the Courts and any non-Washington state court entity~~, except a Washington State court (Supreme Court, court of appeals, superior court, district court, or municipal court)~~, ~~that is provided information~~for release of data contained in the JIS ~~in an electronic format~~. The data dissemination contract shall specify terms and conditions, as approved by the ~~Judicial Information System~~JIS Committee, concerning the data including but not limited to restrictions, obligations, and cost recovery ~~agreements~~fees. ~~Any such contract shall at a minimum include the language contained in Exhibit A – Electronic Data Dissemination Contract. *(Amended February 27, 1998.)*~~

III. ACCESS TO JIS ~~LEGAL~~ RECORDS

~~**Open Records Policy**. The following principles apply to the interpretation of procedural rules or guidelines set forth in this policy.~~

A. Access to and release of JIS data will be consistent with GR 31 and Washington state statutes. Statutes, court rules, case law, and policy guidelines that protect individual privacy and confidential court records shall be adhered to when JIS records or JIS reports are disseminated. All access to JIS records and JIS reports is subject to the requirements of the criteria for release of data specified in JISCR 15(f): availability of data, specificity of the request, potential for infringement of personal privacy created by release of the information requested, and potential disruption to the internal ongoing business of the courts. JIS records or JIS reports provided in electronic format shall be subject to provisions contained in the data dissemination contract.~~Information related to the conduct of the courts' business, including statistical information and information related to the performance of courts and judicial officers, is to be disclosed as fully as resources will permit. In order to effectuate the policies protecting individual privacy which are incorporated in statutes, case law, and policy guidelines, direct downloading of the database is prohibited except for the index items identified in Section III.B.6. Such downloads shall be subject to conditions contained in the electronic data dissemination contract. *(Amended February 27, 1998.)*~~

~~*3.* Dissemination of compiled reports on an individual, including information from more than one case, is to be limited to those items contained in a case index, as defined in Section III.B.6.~~

B. Privacy protections accorded by the Legislature to records held by other state agencies are to be applied to requests for ~~computerized information from court~~JIS records or JIS reports, unless such record is a "court record" as defined in GR 31 and access is controlled by GR 31(d) and GR 31(e). ~~admitted in the record of a~~

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~~judicial proceeding, or otherwise made a part of a file in such a proceeding, so that court computer records will not be used to circumvent such protections.~~

C. **Contact Lists**: ~~Access to JIS information will not be granted when to do so would have the effect of providing access to lists of individuals for commercial purposes, defined as set forth in RCW 42.17.260(6) and WAC 390-13-010, i.e., that in connection with access to a list of individuals, the person requesting the record intends that the list will be used to communicate with the individuals named in the record for the purpose of facilitating profit expecting activity.~~ The use of JIS records or JIS reports for the purpose of commercial solicitation of individuals named in the court records is prohibited. Requests for JIS data for this purpose will be denied.

~~6. Except to the extent that dissemination is restricted by Section IV.B, or is subject to provisions in the electronic data dissemination contract, electronic records representing court documents are to be made available on a case-by-case and court-by-court basis as fully as they are in hard copy form. *(Amended February 27, 1998.)*~~

~~All access to JIS information is subject to the requirements of the criteria for release of data specified in JISCR 15(f): availability of data, specificity of the request, potential for infringement of personal privacy created by release of the information requested, and potential disruption to the internal ongoing business of the courts. JIS information provided in electronic format shall be subject to provisions contained in the electronic data dissemination contract. *(Amended February 27, 1998.)*~~

D. Court and county clerk data dissemination ~~managers~~ administrators will restrict the dissemination of JIS reports to data related to the ~~manager's~~ administrator's particular court, or court operations subject to the supervision of that court~~, except where the court has access to JIS statewide indices~~.

E. Courts and county clerk's offices may direct requestors to the Administrative Office of the Courts if the request falls under GR 31 (g)(2) and creates an undue burden on the court or court clerk operations because of the amount of equipment, materials, staff time, computer time or other resources required to satisfy the request.

F. Routine summary reports will be made available to the public upon request, subject to the payment of an established fee and so long as such request can be met without unduly disrupting the on-going business of the courts.

~~3. Access to JIS legal records, in the form of case-specific records, will be permitted to the extent that such records in other forms are open to inspection by statute, case law and court rule, and unless restricted by the privacy and confidentiality policies below.~~

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4. Individuals, personally or through their designees, may obtain access to compiled legal records pertaining to themselves upon written request, accompanied by a signed waiver of privacy.
5. No compiled reports will be disseminated containing information which permits a person, other than a judicial officer or an attorney engaged in the conduct of court business, to be identified as an individual, except that data dissemination managers may disseminate the following:

    a. Public agency requested reports. Reports requested by public agencies which perform, as a principal function, activities directly related to the prosecution, adjudication, detention, or rehabilitation of criminal offenders, or to the investigation, adjudication, or enforcement of orders related to the violation of professional standards of conduct, specifically including criminal justice agencies certified to receive criminal history record information pursuant to RCW 10.97.030(5)(b).
    b. Personal reports, on the request or signed waiver of the subject of the report.
    c. On court order.

G. An index report, containing some or all of the following information, may be disseminated: *(Amended February 27, 1998.)* shall not contain confidential information as determined by Court Rules, Washington state law and Federal law. This includes but is not limited to:

1. filing date;social security numbers;
2. case caption;financial account numbers;
3. party name and relationship to case (e.g., plaintiff, defendant);driver's license numbers;
4. cause of action or charge;date of birth of a minor child;
5. case number or designation; party's telephone number;
6. case outcome; witness address and phone number; and
7. disposition date.abstract driving record as defined in RCW 46.52.130;

(III.B.6.f. and III.B.6.g. added December 5, 1997.)

An index report provided in electronic format shall be subject to the provisions contained in the electronic data dissemination contract. *(Amended February 27, 1998.)*

A report sorted by case resolution and resolution type, giving index criteria except individual names, may be compiled and released. *(Section added June 21, 1996.)*

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H. Financial Data.

1. Requests to courts or county clerk's offices will be handled by that individual office in the same manner as all other requests for court data.
2. Requests to the AOC for statewide financial court data or for an individual court's data will be handled in the following manner:
   a. Requestor will provide as much detail as possible regarding specific financial information requested. Explanations may include such information as specific codes, accounting or non-accounting needs, statewide aggregate, court aggregate or case-by-case data, and court levels.
   b. The AOC will review the request and submit any clarifications to the requestor. Communications may need to take place between the staff and the requestor so the parties know what is being asked for and what can be provided. The time taken for clarifications and meetings will be in addition to any time estimates given for compiling the data. Further, the requestor will be charged for the staff time under the approved cost recovery fee for research/programming.
   c. Prior to release of the report, the data will be reviewed by delegated court and/or county clerk representatives.

IV. JIS PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY POLICIES

A. Information in JIS records which is sealed, exempted, or otherwise restricted by law or court rule, whether or not directly applicable to the courts, may not be released except by specific court order or by statutory authority.

B. Confidential information regarding individual litigants, witnesses, or jurors that ~~has been collected for the internal administrative operations~~ is contained in case management systems of the courts will not be disseminated. ~~This information includes, but is not limited to, credit card and P.I.N. numbers, and social security numbers.~~ Identifying information (including, but not limited to, residential addresses and residential phone numbers) regarding individual litigants, witnesses, or jurors will not be disseminated, except that the residential addresses of litigants will be available to the extent otherwise permitted by law. *(Section amended September 20, 1996; June 26, 1998.)*

C. A data dissemination ~~manager~~ administrator may provide data for a research report when the identification of specific individuals is ancillary to the purpose of the research, the data will not be sold or otherwise distributed to third parties, and the requester agrees to maintain the confidentiality required by these policies. In such instances, the requester shall complete a research agreement in a form

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prescribed by the ~~Office of the Administrator for~~ Administrative Office of the Courts. The research agreement shall 1) require the requester to explain provisions for the secure protection of any data that is confidential, using physical locks, computer passwords and/or encryption; 2) prohibit the disclosure of data in any form which identifies an individual; 3) prohibit the copying or duplication of information or data provided other than for the stated research, evaluative, or statistical purpose. *(Amended June 6, 1997.)*

V. LIMITATION ON DISSEMINATION OF JUVENILE OFFENDER COURT RECORDS*

The dissemination of juvenile offender court records maintained in the Judicial Information System shall be limited as follows:

A. Juvenile offender court records shall be excluded from any bulk distribution of JIS records by the Administrative Office of the Courts otherwise authorized by GR 31(g), except for research purposes as permitted by statute or court rule.

B. The Administrative Office of the Courts shall not display any information from an official juvenile offender court record on a publicly-accessible website that is a statewide index of court cases.

* Juvenile offender court records shall remain publicly accessible on the JIS Link notwithstanding any provision of this section. *(Section added September 6, 2013.)*

VI. PROCEDURES

A. Uniform procedures for requesting JIS information, and for the appeal of decisions of data dissemination ~~managers~~administrators, shall be as set forth in policies issued by the ~~Office of the Administrator for the Courts~~Administrative Office of the Courts pursuant to JISCR 15(d).

B. In any case where a report is provided, the report must be accompanied by a suitable disclaimer noting that the court, the county clerk's office, and the Administrative Office of the Courts can make no representation regarding the identity of any persons whose names appear in the report, and ~~that the court makes~~can make no representation as to the accuracy and completeness of the data except for court purposes.

Commented [HS1]: Disclaimer that is currently sent with the reports:
The Administrative Office of the Courts, the Washington Courts, and the Washington State County Clerks:
1) Do not warrant that the data or information is accurate or complete;
2) Make no representations regarding the identity of any persons whose names appear in data or information; and
3) Do not assume any liability whatsoever resulting from the release or use of the data or information.
The user should verify the information by personally consulting the "official" record reposing at the court of record.

VII. ACCESS TO AND USE OF DATA BY COURTS

The ~~Courts~~courts, the county clerk's offices, and their employees may access and use JIS records only for the purpose of conducting official court business. Such access and use shall be governed by appropriate security policies and procedures. Each year, all court and county clerk staff will sign a confidentiality agreement by January 31. The courts and the county clerk's offices will then submit a Statement of Compliance to the AOC by March 31 confirming that their staff has executed the agreements.

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VIII. ACCESS TO AND USE OF DATA BY CRIMINAL JUSTICE AGENCIES AND BY THE WASHINGTON STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE

A. "Criminal justice agencies" as defined in ~~RCW Chapter~~ chapter 10.97 RCW shall have additional access to JIS records beyond that which is permitted the public.

B. The JIS Committee shall approve the access level and permitted use(s) for classes of criminal justice agencies including, but not limited to, law enforcement, prosecutors, and corrections. An agency that is not covered by a class may request access.

C. Agencies requesting access under this provision shall identify the information requested and the proposed use(s).

D. Access by criminal justice agencies shall be governed by a~~n~~ ~~electronic~~ data dissemination contract with each such agency. The contract shall:

1. Specify the data to which access is granted.
2. Specify the uses which the agency may make of the data.
3. Include the agency's agreement that its employees will access the data only for the uses specified.

E. The Washington State Attorney General's Office will be provided additional access to JIS records for those cases in which it represents the State.

IX. ACCESS TO AND USE OF DATA BY PUBLIC PURPOSE AGENCIES

A. "Public purpose agency" includes governmental agencies included in the definition of "agency" in RCW ~~42.17.020~~42.56.010 and other non-profit organizations whose principal function is to provide services to the public.

B. A public purpose agency may request court records not publicly accessible for scholarly, governmental, or research purposes where the identification of specific individuals is ancillary to the purpose of the request.

~~C. Upon approval by the JIS Committee, public purpose agencies may be granted additional access to JIS records beyond that which is permitted the public.~~

~~D.~~C. Agencies requesting additional access under this provision shall identify the information requested and the proposed use(s). In reviewing such requests, the ~~JISC~~ courts, the county clerk's offices, and the JIS Committee will consider such criteria as:

1. The extent to which access will result in efficiencies in the operation of a court or courts.
2. The extent to which access will enable the fulfillment of a legislative mandate.

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3. The extent to which access will result in efficiencies in other parts of the criminal justice system.
4. The risks created by permitting such access.

The courts, the county clerk's offices, and the JIS Committee must determine that filling the request will not violate GR 31, and must determine the minimum access to restricted court records necessary for the purpose of the request.

~~E.~~D. Access by public purpose agencies shall be governed by ~~an electronic~~a data dissemination contract ~~with each such agency~~. The contract shall:

1. Require the requestor to specify provisions for the secure protection of any data that is confidential.
~~1.~~2. ~~Specify the data to which access is granted.~~Prohibit the disclosure of data in any form which identifies an individual.
~~2.~~3. ~~Specify the uses which the agency may make of the data~~Prohibit the copying, duplication, or dissemination of information or data provided other than for the stated purpose.
~~3.~~4. ~~Include the agency's agreement that its employees will access the data only for the uses specified~~Maintain a log of any distribution of court records which will be open and available for audit by the court, the county clerk's office or the AOC. Any audit should verify that the court records are being appropriately used and in a manner consistent with GR 31.

~~X. E-MAIL~~

~~The JIS provides e-mail for official court business use only. Access to judicial officers' and court employees' e-mail is restricted. Access to a judicial officer's e-mail files shall only be granted with the permission of the judicial officer involved. Request for access to a court employee's e-mail or to logs containing records on an employee's e-mail shall be subject to the review and approval of the county clerk if the employee is employed in the clerk's office, or the presiding judge or court administrator if the employee is employed by the court. Nothing in this policy shall be used as a reason to withhold records which are the subject of a subpoena or otherwise available to the public.~~

~~XI.~~X. VERSION HISTORY

These policies shall take effect 30 days from the date of their adoption by the Judicial Information Systems Committee, May 19, 1995.

- Adopted May 19, 1995
- Amended June 21, 1996
- Amended September 20, 1996
- Amended June 6, 1997
- Amended December 5, 1997

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- Amended February 27, 1998
- Amended June 26, 1998
- Amended September 6, 2013

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