



**Juvenile Court**

5501 Sixth Avenue  
Tacoma, WA 98406  
(253) 798-7900

**TJ Bohl**  
Administrator

April 25, 2014

Received  
Washington State Supreme Court

APR 30 2014

Ronald R. Carpenter  
Clerk

Supreme Court of Washington  
P.O. Box 40929  
Olympia, WA 98504-9828

RE: Proposed court rule JuCR 1.6/Physical Restraints in the Juvenile Court Room

Dear Clerk of the Supreme Court,

As the Pierce County Juvenile Court Administrator, I submit this letter in opposition of proposed court rule JuCR 1.6/Physical Restraints in the Juvenile Courtroom. The primary reasons for the opposition include a lack of security presence in our courtrooms, very poorly designed courtrooms for security purposes, and the impulsivity/unpredictability of the youth we serve.

Pierce County is not unique when it comes to the safety and security challenges presented by our physical layout. We have a facility where the courtrooms were designed with little thought as to security (5 entry/exit doors) or functionality (transporting youth to court requires mixing with the public in unsecured areas). In addition, we have exterior doors that are equipped with push-bar fire doors that cannot be locked from the inside. Clearly, the physical design and layout is not ideal. Add this to the fact that the youth we serve bring unpredictability and impulsiveness, as well as a failure to appreciate the risks and consequences of their actions, and the risk is simply too substantial.

As a Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative site, the number of youth in detention each day has significantly decreased. Youth who do not meet the detention criteria (high likelihood of running away or danger to the community) are placed in alternatives to detention. The youth that remain in secure detention generally are facing very serious charges and/or present with an extensive history of running away. Pierce County uses leg restraints on all youth who attend a court hearing from secure detention. Exceptions to this involve no restraints on pregnant females (although we send two Detention Officers as escorts to the hearing) and occasionally use belly-chains on aggressive, assaultive youth. The use of restraints provides predictability, structure and control to the courtroom and has provided the best deterrent to convince a youth

that trying to escape from court is a bad idea. We have learned that even the restraints are not a complete deterrent. On a few occasions, we have had youth that have tried to leave in spite of wearing restraints.

Each youth in detention that is brought before the court is escorted by a Juvenile Detention Officer. We typically do not have a law enforcement presence in the courtroom unless we have alerted them to a potential volatile or dangerous situation. The County just recently hired a full time deputy; however his duties include providing security for the entire campus including three dependency courts which often have hostile and disgruntled parents whose children have been removed by the State. When issues arise in court, the typical response is to lockdown the building and send additional Detention Officers into the courtroom to respond. Due to budget reductions, the number of Detention Officers on shift each day has significantly decreased. This court rule would require us to increase the number of officers on shift (with no additional funding) to be available to adequately respond to aggressive, volatile youth or attempted escapees. It would also create substantially more court hearings which would require Judicial and court resources.

For these reasons outlined above, we are opposed to implementation of court rule JuCR1.6.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'TJ Bohl', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

TJ Bohl  
Administrator  
Pierce County Juvenile Court  
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