

***An Important Update from the Kitsap County Superior and District Courts:***

In view of the rising rate of COVID infection in Kitsap County and the Governor's revised business restrictions announced Sunday, November 15, 2020, we have determined that one additional measure is necessary to further reduce the public's physical appearances and increase public safety in the Kitsap County Courthouse.

In consultation with Prosecutor Chad Enright and Chief Deputy Prosecutor Ione George; Andy Anderson and Steve Lewis from our Office of Public Defense; and, Phil Havers, Chair of our Civil Practice & Procedures Committee, we have resolved to temporarily reduce the Superior Court's and District Court's capacity to conduct only one jury trial at a time per Court. Further, the Superior and District Courts will coordinate efforts to ensure that only one jury selection/voir dire is initiated in the Courthouse at any one time. These measures are instituted immediately, and will remain in place through December 14, 2020, consistent with the Governor's timeline for new restrictions.

In making this decision, we consulted with the Kitsap Public Health District earlier this week and reviewed the precautionary measures that we have already instituted to promote good health and safety in our jury trial practices. These include:

- Bringing no more than 20 jurors into the Courthouse per panel; and no more than 15-20 jurors (Superior Court) and 12 jurors (District Court) into trial courtrooms to ensure social distancing;
- Summarily excusing individual jurors who refuse to comply with Courthouse safety measures;
- Utilizing COVID-related questions/questionnaires to assess the health of jurors beginning the day they arrive for jury service;
- Providing, and strongly encouraging the use of, KN95 masks from the moment jurors check-in with the Jury Office;
- Socially distancing jurors in the hallway awaiting check-in, and properly distancing chairs in the Jury Assembly Room, reducing capacity to no more than 20;
- Measuring and taping-off seating spaces in courtrooms for attorneys, witnesses, and court employees to ensure 6 feet social distancing;
- Employing strategically placed plexiglass to enhance protection of Court employees;
- Seating jurors in gallery spaces, separating jurors in multiple deliberation rooms during breaks, and using courtrooms as deliberation space
- Promoting the use of remote appearances by witnesses during trial; and remote appearances by attorneys, parties, and others in most Court calendars; and,
- With the availability of CARES Act funding, employing an additional court employee between 9am and 3:30pm to ensure courtrooms, jury assembly areas, and common public areas are regularly sanitized through each operational day.

Additionally, with regular court calendars, scheduled non-trial hearings, and non-jury trial proceedings, we have continued to call for remote video appearances unless impossible to do so in order that the Court's business can effectively continue while protecting the health and safety of our colleagues, employees, attorneys and citizens.

You can be reassured that Kitsap Public Health District representatives were satisfied with the safety protocols already in place in the Courthouse and offered only very minor suggestions for increasing on-site protection of those who appear in person.

However, the spirit of the Governor's restrictions issued earlier this week clearly focus on reducing gatherings, something that we believe we can only achieve by temporarily reducing the number of jury trials that we conduct during this intermediate period of time. We will reassess our capacity to expand in early December.

Thank you for your continuing assistance and support as we respond to changing, pandemic-driven circumstances affecting both our Courthouse and our community.

Stay safe and healthy!

Hon. Kevin D. Hull, Presiding Judge  
Kitsap County Superior Court

Hon. Jeffrey J. Jahns, Presiding Judge  
Kitsap County District Court