



THURSTON COUNTY COURTS

PRESS RELEASE

March 13, 2020



COVID-19 Updated March 13, 2020 Changes effective March 16, 2020

The Courts continue to work closely with Thurston County Public Health and Social Services to ensure the health and well-being of court employees, litigants, attorneys, and the general public while performing our Constitutional duties. Based on Governor Inslee's Press Conferences on March 11, 2020 and March 12, 2020, the Thurston County Board of Commissioners Emergency Resolution dated March 12, 2020, the Thurston County Board of Health Resolution 3-2020 dated March 12, 2020 and after consultation with Thurston County Public Health and Social Services, the Courts will implement the following changes in response to the COVID-19 risk.

Please continue to review this website for changes and updates as the COVID-19 response is rapidly changing.

Superior Court

Beginning March 16, 2020 and through May 15, 2020, Superior Court will only conduct one jury trial at a time to ensure social distancing for jurors. Superior Court will ensure that jurors have a large space for jury orientation, two waiting room areas during the trial, additional spacing and seating in the jury box and a larger space for deliberations. In addition, jurors who meet any of the following criteria will be rescheduled for jury service:

- Chronic health conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes;
- Weakened immune system;
- Pregnant;
- Sixty (60) years of age or older;
- If you are sick or have recently been in contact with someone who is sick or meets the above criteria; or
- If you have work, daycare or transportation issues due to emergency closures.

If you meet any of these criteria and do not wish to report for jury duty, please contact the Jury Administrator at (360) 754-4107 to have your service rescheduled to a later time.

Other than jurors, if you feel you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and feel you cannot make it at your scheduled court time, you must call the contact who subpoenaed you, or the court, using the contact information listed below:

Main Campus

Civil Calendars: Superior Court will only hear emergent or time sensitive matters on civil calendars. Non-emergent motions unless otherwise specified will be struck, continued, heard

without oral argument or heard telephonically. All civil trials are suspended through May 15, 2020. A Judicial Assistant will be in contact with you to determine new trial dates.

Criminal Calendars and Cases: Please contact your lawyer regarding your case before coming to court.

DUI/Drug Court: Court Participants who are sick or ill should call (360) 709-3100 before coming into the DUI/Drug Court building.

Family and Juvenile Court

Family Law Motions: Litigants and attorneys are encouraged to limit motions when possible and are encouraged to file only motions regarding emergent issues. Family Law litigants and attorneys are encouraged to appear by phone if sick or ill by calling 360-709-3295 **at least three hours prior to your hearing**. If you cannot call in three hours before, your motion maybe rescheduled.

Final Orders Calendar: All in-person hearings on the agreed finalization (final orders) calendar will be suspended beginning March 20, 2020. If you have scheduled a date to finalize your agreed case, please contact 360-709-3295 and we will assist you with your options.

Trial Confirmation: The FJC Trial Confirmation calendar will be conducted via phone only. You do not need to come to court. Please contact 360-709-3295 to appear telephonically.

Dependency Motions before Judges: Each Judge is managing their calendars. Parties are strongly encouraged to request telephonic appearances, when sick or ill by calling 360-709-3295 **at least three hours prior to your hearing**. If you cannot call in three hours before, your motion maybe rescheduled.

Family Law Orientation: In person classes have been canceled. In lieu of in person classes, we will be sending class participants materials to review. If you need to attend the Family Law Orientation, we will post instructions on Superior Courts website shortly explaining how to receive materials.

Guardianship and Probate Calendar and Vulnerable Adult Protection Order Calendar: Litigants and attorneys are encouraged to limit motions when possible and are encouraged to file only motions regarding emergent or time sensitive issues. Attorneys and participations are encouraged to appear by phone/video by calling 360-709-3295 **at least 5 hours prior to your hearing**. If you cannot call in five hours before, your motion maybe rescheduled.

Settlement Conferences: All settlement conferences will be conducted by phone. Please contact 360-709-3295 to appear telephonically.

All other calendars including Family Recovery Court and ITA Calendars offsite will remain as currently scheduled. Updates will be posted on the Courts website. Superior Court anticipates updating information no later than March 20, 2020.

Thurston County Clerk

Effective Monday March 16, 2020 the following changes will occur. Future updates can be found on the Thurston County Clerk's Website at: www.co.thurston.co.wa.us/clerk

In an effort to limit person-to-person contact, the Clerk is asking that all new cases and documents be filed through the Clerk's E-Filing system or sent to our office via mail. A link to register and begin e-filing is at: <https://clerkefile.co.thurston.wa.us>

Drug Court, Adult and Juvenile Legal Financial Obligation Payments will not be taken at the counters. All payments will need to be mailed to: Thurston County Clerk, 2000 Lakeridge Drive SW, Olympia, WA 98502 or paid online at: <https://payments.lexisnexis.com/wa/co/thurston/clerk>

Clerk Main Courthouse

Lobby and public viewing area will remain open at this time, but only one person will be allowed in the lobby area at a time and one person in the public viewing area.

Clerk Family Juvenile Court

Lobby and public viewing area will remain open at this time, but only one person will be allowed in the lobby area at a time and one person in the public viewing area.

Facilitator Appointments will be done telephonically only. Paperwork should be emailed at least two hours prior to appointment to: county_clerk@co.thurston.wa.us.

Protection, Sexual Assault, Harassment and Vulnerable Adult Petitions. In an effort to limit the amount of time the public is present in the building; we will email packets and meet telephonically with individuals that are petitioning for a temporary protection order. Information and paperwork can be requested by calling (360) 709-3268, (360) 709-3275 or (360) 709-3255. Only one staff and one person from the public will be allowed in the Clerk's interview room.

Additional and specific information can be found at the Clerk's Website: www.co.thurston.wa.us/clerk or by calling (360) 786-5430 during normal business hours.

District Court

Effective March 16, 2020, and until further notice by District Court, the following changes are being made.

Criminal Matters: please contact your attorney before coming to Court. Emergency rules have been put in place which may allow your case to proceed without you appearing in Court.

Jury trials have been suspended until further notice. Due to space limitations in District Court, appropriate social distancing cannot be achieved.

Mental Health and Veterans Court: all care coordinator appointments will be conducted by telephone or video call. Participants should contact their care coordinator for additional details.

The Monday group has been suspended. All other court hearings will be conducted as usual.

Probation: all probation appointments will be conducted by telephone. Probation clients should contact their probation officer for further information.

Civil Cases: anti-harassment, protection orders and vehicle impounds will continue to be filed and heard. All other civil matters, including name changes, small claims, civil motions and civil trials are suspended until further notice. You will receive a notice when your case has been rescheduled.

Please hold any new filings until further notice. We will post more information when electronic filing becomes available.

Traffic Infractions: all traffic infraction calendars have been suspended until further notice. If you are requesting a deferral, a mitigation or a contested hearing, you may go to the Court's website at <https://www.co.thurston.wa.us/distcrt/respond/> and submit the request online. The case will be reviewed by the judge and a decision emailed to you.

If you do choose to request a hearing in person, please submit the request using the online resources listed above. Your case will not be scheduled until the Court resumes normal operations.

If you are paying a ticket, please go to <https://www.co.thurston.wa.us/distcrt/court-information/payment-information/> for options on how to pay without coming to Court.

If you have any questions, please call the court at 360-786-5450.

Yelm Municipal Court

Effective March 16, 2020, and until further notice by the Municipal Court, the following changes are being made.

If you are sick or experiencing flu-like symptoms such as a cough, fever or other respiratory problem, please do not come into our court office or building. If you have a court hearing scheduled and cannot make it due to illness, please call us at 360-458-3242 to inform us, or request a continuance.

Criminal Matters: please contact your attorney before coming to Court. Emergency rules have been put in place which may allow your case to proceed without you appearing in Court.

Review Calendar and Infractions: all 11:00 a.m. Review hearings and 2:30 p.m. Infractions can be done by telephonic appearance if requested by you ahead of time.

Arraignments: emergency rules have been put in place to allow your case to be heard if appearing in person.

For those choosing to appear in person for your scheduled court hearings, we ask for your patience and understanding.

If you are paying a ticket, please go to https://www.yelmwa.gov/connect/municipal_court/payments_and_collections.php for options on how to pay without coming to Court.

Passports: unless you have scheduled travel plans and need to apply for a passport, we encourage you to not come in to our office until further notice. You can contact our office for a list of other passport agencies in the area.

The Courts continue to encourage everyone to stay informed of the facts by following and sharing trusted sources of accurate public health information. Stay tuned to the Thurston County Public Health and Social Services website and the Washington State Coronavirus (COVID-19) hotline at 1-800-525-0127. Thurston County Public Health and Social Services website: <https://www.thurstoncountywa.gov/phss/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>

Thank you for your understanding during these extraordinary circumstances. We hope you all remain healthy, and we appreciate you keeping calm and helping others in our community do the same.