

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT
FOR THE COUNTY OF SKAGIT

IN THE MATTER OF) ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER
EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO COVID-19) NO. 22-02
OUTBREAK)

WHEREAS, an identified public health emergency exists due to the current outbreak of COVID-19 virus, which emergency has been previously identified in this court's Emergency Administrative Orders, No. 20-1 through and including No. 22-01; and

WHEREAS, Skagit County, Washington State, along with the rest of the state and the country, has recently experienced a steep rise in COVID-19 transmission due to the omicron variant of said virus; and

WHEREAS, the rates of transmission and hospitalizations from COVID-19, primarily the omicron variant, have increased to record-high levels during the month of January, where they remain at near-peak levels;

WHEREAS, the level and risk of community transmission is at a point where continued operations for conducting trials with jurors, parties, witnesses, attorneys, and court staff, are likely to be significantly interrupted due to required periods of isolation and quarantine for individuals with COVID-19 symptoms, exposure, and/or positive test results; and

WHEREAS, Skagit County Public Health has recommended that jury trials not take place during the current surge; and

WHEREAS, this court incorporates by reference all of its findings set forth in its previous administrative orders described above and now adopts an order pursuant to the State Supreme Court's Order No. 25700-B-646 to further restrict this court's operations in the interest of public health and safety; and

WHEREAS, the court recognizes the compulsory nature of hearings and trials and that participants often sit in the courtrooms for extended periods of time during court appearances, which poses an involuntary risk of transmission of the virus for many individuals in the courtroom if precautions are not taken; and

NOW, THEREFORE, PURSUANT TO THE court's authority to administer justice and to ensure the safety of litigants, members of the public, court staff, attorneys, commissioners, and judges IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT:

1. **JURY TRIALS.** Jury trial dates for any and all cases with an assigned jury trial date prior to February 18, 2022 are hereby stricken. Absent an order extending this suspension, jury trials shall resume on February 22, 2022.
2. **CRIMINAL JURY TRIALS.** The court finds that COVID-19 presents a serious danger in congregate settings and that current public health situation is an unavoidable circumstance under CrR 3.3(e)(8) constituting good cause to continue all jury trials in the administration of justice. The time period between January 3, 2022 and the close of business on February 18, 2022 shall be excluded for purposes of calculating time for trial. CrR 3.3. Counsel on criminal matters shall provide proposed orders with new dates.
3. **CIVIL JURY TRIALS.** Counsel on non-criminal matters shall re-note said matters for trial assignment.
4. **LIMITING IN-PERSON APPEARANCES.** The court reiterates its earlier directives regarding in-person appearances given the severity of the current resurgence within the community and directs all court users to appear remotely except as specified in its Administrative Order 21-4 or under individualized court orders.
5. **ADDITIONAL COURTROOM PRECAUTIONS.** The court refers to its prior exclusion due to illness or COVID-19 exposure or suspected exposure as enumerated in Paragraph 1 of its Administrative Order 21-4. Further, masking and physical distancing as detailed in Paragraph 2 of Administrative Order 21-4 will be strictly enforced.
6. **VACCINATION REQUIREMENTS AND JURORS.** This court's September 2, 2021 Administrative Order 21-6 related to vaccination and testing requirements for court employees and volunteers does not apply to jurors.
7. **SUSPENSION OF RULES.** This order modifies or suspends any and all court rules, both Local Court Rules and State Court Rules, which are inconsistent with the terms set forth herein.

8. **CONFLICTING ORDERS.** In the event that this administrative order conflicts in any way with the Washington Supreme Court's orders now or hereafter issued, the Supreme Court's orders shall prevail. To the extent this order may conflict with this court's Administrative Order 21-4, dated July 23, 2021, this order shall prevail. Except as modified by this order, the terms in the court's Administrative Order No. 21-4 remain effective in accordance with the terms thereof.
9. **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This order becomes effective upon signing and shall remain in effect until modified or terminated by court order.

DATED this 31st day of January, 2022.



Laura M. Riquelme
Presiding Judge