

**COVID 19  
SAFETY PLAN**

**YAKIMA MUNICIPAL COURT  
200 S. THIRD STREET  
YAKIMA, WA 98901**

**PREPARED BY SUSAN J. WOODARD  
PRESIDING JUDGE  
AUGUST 31, 2020**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In response to the COVID 19 pandemic, the Yakima Municipal Court consults with the Yakima County Health District along with other local officials to ensure the health and well-being of court employees, litigants, attorneys and the public while performing constitutional and statutory duties that provide access to justice.

This document addresses how social distancing and other recognized public health measures are being implemented in the court to minimize the risk of exposure and transmission of COVID 19. The Court acknowledges that the risk cannot be completely eliminated, but is committed to lowering the risk as much as possible with the shared responsibility of individual court users. The court accomplishes this by implementing recommended practices by health officials and local leaders, evaluating and modifying practices as public health conditions evolve, and educating the staff, court users and the public. This plan will be reviewed regularly as lessons are learned and more information is obtained from the Yakima County Health District. As such, the plan may change frequently, as best practices and official guidance from the Health District, the Supreme Court, the Governor, and other sources are subject to frequent change.

Court representatives are in regular contact with the Yakima County Health District. The court will strive to the extent possible to adhere to the prevailing guidelines in making further modifications, taking into consideration the following factors:

- COVID 19 infection activity (# and trends in COVID 19 cases and mortality);
- Health care system readiness (hospital capacity, number of ventilators and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) availability);
- Testing capacity and availability (geographic distribution of testing, laboratory capacity, test kit availability, and number of test performed per day)
- Case investigation and contact tracing (staffing availability, case management plans; rate of case investigations; availability of Isolation or Quarantine facilities);
- Ability to protect high-risk populations (number of outbreaks in congregate settings; demographic data to identify and monitor high-risk populations); and
- The Court's responsibility to perform constitutional and statutory duties.

## **SOCIAL DISTANCING, FACIAL COVERINGS and HAND SANITIZING STATIONS**

### **Shared Spaces**

The court facility is shared by the police department, the city legal department, and the corrections division. The common area consists of a single point of entry and a shared lobby with the police department. This common area is clearly marked with social distancing floor decals indicating where people should stand while waiting to conduct police or court business. It is also equipped with signage in English and Spanish reminding the public how to stop the spread of germs to prevent the transmission of respiratory diseases such as COVID 19. Every person entering this building is required to wear a facial covering. Masks will be available at the point of

entry for those who appear without a facial covering. Face shields are available for those who cannot wear a mask. Additionally, hand sanitizing stations are provided in these common areas.

The Court Clerk's office is accessed through the shared lobby. The customer service windows have clear barriers to separate the clerk and the court user at these windows. The court clerk at the window will also be wearing a facial covering.

## **Courtrooms**

The Municipal Court has 2 courtrooms accessed through the lobby by a common hallway.

- Each courtroom has markings on the benches where people can sit maintaining a six foot distance from others.
- Each courtroom session will have limited capacity for defendants and the public. Courtroom 1 will be limited to 14 individuals per session. Courtroom 2 will be limited to 7 individuals. These numbers exclude court personnel, judicial officers, corrections staff and attorneys who are stationed in a portion of the courtroom separated from the general public.
- Every court participant, including court staff, judicial staff, corrections staff and attorneys will be required to wear a facial covering.
- Each court session will have staggered start times to limit congestion in the hallway and courtrooms.
- Those seated at counsel tables may not be able to practice six feet social distancing during individual hearings, thus, as noted, every court participant is required to wear a facial covering.
- The courtroom clerk station has a clear barrier installed to protect the court clerk and court participants from contact as six feet distancing cannot be observed when receiving paperwork.

## **COURT CALENDARS**

Court calendars are available on the Yakima Municipal Court website: [www.yakimawa.gov/services/municipal-court](http://www.yakimawa.gov/services/municipal-court). They are also visible on the calendar monitors on the north wall of the hallway outside of Courtroom 1.

Some criminal hearings will be conducted by ZOOM upon motion of defense attorneys. Those who have an attorney and wish to appear remotely, must contact their attorney to schedule. If a defendant is not represented by an attorney, and wishes to appear remotely, the court may be contacted at the above website.

Court calendars will be staggered in start times to ensure proper social distancing. We are limiting the number of court users who can occupy space in Courtroom 1 to 14 persons and in Courtroom 2 to 7 persons. Generally scheduling of cases will be done at a rate of 7-10 per hour. Defendants must check their notices for the specific time of appearance. To ensure adequate social

distancing, the requirement that parties sign documents reviewed in court may be waived. The Judge will review the document in court on the record and indicate as such on the document. The court participant will receive a copies of documents before leaving court if appearing in person. In the case of a remote appearance, the defendant will receive a copy of the document in the mail. For greater public access to the court, all court sessions are being streamed live to YouTube which can be accessed by clicking on the link in the Municipal Court website noted above.

## **CLERK'S OFFICE**

The Yakima Municipal Court clerk's office is available by telephone Monday through Friday at 509-575-3050, and in person Monday through Friday from 9AM -11AM and 1:30 PM -3:30PM, or via the website. Customer Service windows have protective barriers to limit exposure to and transmission of COVID 19. Hand sanitizer is also provided at the window. If appearing personally at the Clerk's Office, please be prepared with the appropriate facial covering. Social distancing floor decals mark where you must stand to in accordance with current public health directives. Signage in English and Spanish is displayed throughout the Court/Police lobby to remind everyone of the need to be vigilant in following protective measures in light of the pandemic.

## **PROBATION SERVICES**

Probation Services for the City of Yakima are provided by Yakima County District Court Probation located at 128 N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Room #200, Yakima, WA 98901. The following information is provided by the District Court in conjunction with the County's COVID 19 Safety Plan.

Probation may be contacted in the following manner:

- 509-574-1860
- 1-800 572-7354
- FAX 509-574-1889
- [www.yakimacounty.us/District-Court-Probation](http://www.yakimacounty.us/District-Court-Probation)

Staff are practicing social distancing and wearing facial coverings. If you are personally appearing at probation, please be prepared with the appropriate facial covering.

Social distancing floor decals mark where you must stand to maintain a safe social distance.

Signage in English and Spanish is present throughout the probation area to remind everyone of the need to be vigilant in following protective measure against the virus.

### **Probation Services Procedures**

- Probation Officers have been conducting all probation appointments remotely, either via phone or ZOOM.
- If an in-person appointment is necessary, work stations have been arranged in the large training room at the probation office. The work stations have a Plexiglas barrier between the Probation Officer and the client. Both are required to wear a facial covering during the appointment.

- Each work station is six feet distance from other work stations.
- To ensure greater protection, whenever possible windows will be opened in the space to enhance fresh air flow.

### **Probation Services Programs**

- Traffic Safety courses are available on line. For those unable to participate on line, Probation Services will hold classes observing public health safeguards noted in the numbered section below.
- Cost Recovery (Consumer Awareness) classes are only conducted in-person, again observing public health safeguards as follows:
  1. Scheduled in the large training room at Probation Services
  2. Class size limited to 7 to accommodate social distancing
  3. Facial Coverings required for participants and instructors
  4. Windows will be opened when conditions allow

### **CLEANING, SANITATION AND AIR VENTILATION**

#### **Courtrooms:**

- Hand sanitizer is provided at the entrance of each courtroom, on counsel tables and at the clerk's station
- During court sessions, tables, benches and other commonly touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected.
- Each night, staff from facility services thoroughly clean each courtroom with hospital grade disinfectant.
- Each courtroom is equipped with an automatic air dilution system with a minimum of 10% fresh air up to 100% fresh air as conditions demand. Air changes are also automatic hourly, with the number of changes dictated again as conditions demand, but no less than the mandatory 6 air changes per hour. The HVAC system has 2" filters for air supply and 4" filters for air return.

#### **Building Common Spaces**

- Hand sanitizer is available throughout the facility, either affixed to the wall, or in dispensers on counters or tables.
- Facilities staff frequently clean commonly touched surfaces throughout the day.
- Each night facility staff clean the building thoroughly with disinfectant.
- Signage in English and Spanish remind the public how to stop the spread of germs to prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID 19.

## **Jury Trials**

Pursuant to Supreme Court Order 25700-B-631, jury trials throughout Washington State were permitted to resume effective July 6, 2020 if infection rates in individual jurisdictions made it safe to do so. Due to the local rate of infection and the current public health recommendations the Municipal Court has not yet resumed jury trials. The anticipated date to recommence jury trials is after October 1, 2020. The Yakima Municipal Court is in the process of securing an off-site location for the jury pooling and jury selection processes to accommodate social distancing. Once a jury has been empaneled, the jury trial will take place at the court facility with the above-mentioned public health safeguards. This document will be revised when the arrangements are completed.