



Circuit Court Jury Service During COVID

Fact Sheet

Chief Justice Orders (CJOs)

The Chief Justice issued numerous CJOs to address issues during the pandemic:

- [CJO 20-016](#) – Imposing Level 2 and 3 Restrictions on Court Operations
- [CJO 20-025](#) – Order Regarding the Use of Protective Face Coverings in the Oregon Supreme Court Building
- [CJO 20-028](#) – Order Directing or Permitting Appearances at Arraignments by Remote Means
- [CJO 20-045](#) – Order Regarding the Use of Protective Face Coverings in the Oregon State Courts
- [CJO 20-047](#) – Order Imposing In-Person Restrictions on Court Operations During Statewide “Freeze”
- [CJO 21-016](#) – Order Providing Exception to the Required Use of Protective Face Coverings in the Oregon State Courts
- [CJO 21-025](#) – Order Establishing Updated Directives Relating to Court Operations
- [CJO 21-028](#) – Order Reinstating Required Use of Protective Face Coverings in the Oregon State Courts, With Exceptions
- [CJO 21-030](#) – Order Requiring Use of Protective Face Coverings in the Oregon State Courts
- [CJO 21-035](#) – Order Imposing Updated Social Distancing Requirement
- [CJO 21-039](#) – Order Imposing Vaccination Requirement
- [CJO 21-050](#) – Order Lifting Social Distancing Requirements
- [CJO 21-058](#) – Order Extending Presiding Judge Authority to Impose Social Distancing Requirement
- [CJO 22-002](#) – Order Revising and Generally Lifting Requirement for Use of Protective Face Coverings in the Oregon State Courts
- [CJO 22-003](#) – Order Lifting Vaccination Requirement
- [CJO 22-012](#) – Order Permitting Remote Proceedings and Continuing Protective Measures
- [CJO 23-028](#) – Order Permitting Remote Proceedings

Presiding Judge Orders (PJOs)

A [variety of PJOs related to COVID](#) can be found on the State of Oregon Law Library website.

Linn County Experience

- Primarily rural county, considered medium-sized in Oregon
- Generally, summons around 27,000 jurors per year (1 in 5 adults)
- Suspended jury trials from March – May 2020, as did most of Oregon’s counties
- From June 2020 to June 2021, jury trials conducted at an off-site location (Linn County Fairgrounds) with social distancing and masking required
 - Had to transport equipment and supplies to location
 - Live streamed trials back to the courthouse to reduce the number of people in the courtroom
 - Critical changes:
 - Chairs numbered and jurors assigned a seat number
 - Created a new orientation video to replace the bulk of in-person instruction
 - Check-in moved from after orientation to before (so seat numbers could be assigned)
 - Sanitation of chairs after orientation and selection
 - Lessons learned: Good signage and clear communication with jurors were critical
- Starting in July 2021, scheduled a limited number of jury trials in the courthouse, under masking and social distancing restrictions
- Late 2021, lifted all restrictions and normal trial scheduling resumed

Other County Experiences

- Some counties, including Multnomah, did remote jury selection using WebEx, after which the selected jury would come to court for the trial.¹
 - This avoided the need to have a large number of potential jurors come to the courthouse, where social distancing would not be possible.
 - Multnomah County District Attorney’s Office and Washington County District Attorney’s Office both allowed completely virtual grand juries during this time.
- During trials, many courtrooms had to be rearranged, or jurors had to sit outside the normal jury box in order to allow for social distancing.
- So many counties worked to accommodate virtual jury selection during COVID that OJD established some statewide practices. **Note:** The documents below are examples only and were designed to help courts analyze what resources are needed for jury selection. They would need to be reviewed, updated, and formalized before any official use.
 - [Remote Hearing Checklist for Court Staff \(PDF\)](#)
 - [Remote Hearing Checklist for Judges and Attorneys \(PDF\)](#)

¹ Multnomah County conducted two entire trials remotely during COVID.

o [Sample Presentation for Remote Jury Selection \(PDF\)](#)

- Few courts have retained remote or online procedures related to jury service, though there are a few who continue to hold portions of jury trials virtually. Nearly all courts have returned all jury proceedings back to in person. Potentially the largest lasting impact is that many courts have transitioned the Oregon juror orientation videos (one general, one about implicit bias) from their in-person orientation to posting them on their websites and asking/requiring individuals to watch them prior to their reporting date.
- Marion County – Remote Voir Dire. “We do not have room in our courtrooms for a “full” voir dire, so we have to do it in panels. To save time, we are live streaming voir dire to a second courtroom so we don’t have to repeat the entire process for the second panel.”
- Deschutes County – Remodeled a courtroom, including the jury assembly room, to increase space. Prior to social distancing requirements, the area held around 80 people. With the renovation, the space held 27 socially distanced jurors.

Courtroom B before remodeling:



Jury assembly room after remodeling:



Courtroom B after remodeling to allow more space for social distancing:



Courtroom B after remodeling:



External Resources

American Board of Trial Advocates Report: [Guidance for Conducting Civil Jury Trials During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (link goes to external website).