

District Court now offers self-scheduling for infraction hearings

People who need to schedule infraction hearings with Pierce County District Court can now do so online without having to wait on the phone or at the public counter.

Developed by District Court with support from Pierce County's Information Technology Department, this application allows people to schedule an infraction hearing or submit a Hearing by Mail statement at their convenience. Previously, customers could schedule a hearing only by mail, telephone or by appearing in person at the court's public counter. During a soft launch over the past month, 80 people have used the new service.

Besides the convenience for the public, the online system also is expected to reduce the substantial traffic at the court's public counter, over the phone and through the mail. In 2012, there were 58,000 infraction citations filed in District Court. Of those, 16,000 resulted in in-court hearings and 6,000 in Hearings by Mail. In addition, the court fielded 81,000 telephone inquiries from citizens, attorneys and other court customers.

"Pierce County District Court is very pleased to offer this new way of doing business that makes it easier to access the court's services. This will benefit everyone involved - the public, the county and the court," said Presiding Judge Maggie Ross.

District Court is the first court of limited jurisdiction in Washington State - and one of the only courts of limited jurisdiction in the country - to introduce this convenient self-scheduling service.

"Our IT staff is constantly striving to help improve the delivery of services in ways that are customer friendly and efficient," said Pierce County Information Technology Director Linda Gerull. "Giving people the ability to self-schedule their interaction with the court is a great step forward and helps set the bar for other jurisdictions."

The self-scheduler is one of two new online features on the District Court's website. The other is an option to reach the court's customer service staff via an online "Live Chat." Since early January, more than 1,200 people have been served via Live Chat as an alternative to waiting to contact a court representative over the phone or at the public counter.

Public reaction to these innovations has been very positive. As one customer expressed it via email: "Please let the 'higher-ups' know how great this option is! This is a GREAT alternative, not to mention much more efficient!"

District Court can be found at www.piercecountywa.org/distcrt.