

YAKIMA COUNTY DISTRICT COURT

GR 31.1 ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS REQUEST POLICY

- I. **POLICY STATEMENT:** Consistent with the principles of open administration and access to justice as provided by Article I, section 10 of the Washington State Constitution and embodied in the GR 31.1, it is the policy of the Yakima County District Court to facilitate and where appropriate make available to the public, the courts administrative records.

a) Overview

This policy sets forth the process by which the Yakima County District Court handle administrative records requests. Information for members of the public interested in filing a request for administrative records is contained in GR 31.1.

b) Staffing of Administrative Records Requests

Yakima County District Court shall have a designated Administrative Records Officer and, if possible, one back up that is responsible for processing all administrative record requests for the court. The court's Administrative Records Officer shall report to the Presiding Judge or the Presiding Judge's designee and to the Court's Manager or the Managers' designee

c) Processing of Records Requests

1. Distribution of Requests and Preservation of Records

The Administrative Records Officer will determine which employees may have records responsive to the request. The Administrative Records Officer shall email the text of the request, or a summary, to the appropriate staff, setting a time for response. Staff shall ensure that any records potentially responsive to the request will not be destroyed pending the processing of the request.

2. Searching for Responsive Documents

Each employee contacted shall either (1) indicate that he or she has no responsive documents; (2) indicate that he or she has responsive documents and provide them; (3) specify a reasonable time within which he or she can search for the records and provide a more thorough response; or (4) describe how the request should be clarified. If the employee has responsive documents, he or she shall provide them to the Administrative Records Officer. In the event it is difficult to produce copies of the responsive documents, either because of their size or format or because they are numerous, the employee should contact the Administrative Records Officer to determine whether there are options to producing copies. The Administrative Records Officer shall ensure that records of former staff members also are searched for requested information.

3. Providing response to the Requestor

The Administrative Records Officer shall respond to the requestor within five business days after receiving the request by: (1) providing responsive records along with a statement of why records or portions thereof are exempt from disclosure. If documents are exempt (or may be exempt) from disclosure under GR 31.1, the Administrative Records Officer shall provide a summary of why the documents are or may be exempt, with specific reference to the provision of GR 31.1, state or federal law that is the basis provided; (2) providing a date by which responsive documents will be provided; or (3) requesting clarification of the request. The Administrative Records Officer will make every effort to work with the requestor to clarify the request and to provide responsive records. Upon request, the Administrative Records Officer will provide a copy of any public records responses to the organizational unit that participated in providing records, noting if a protective order precludes disclosure of any of the records.

4. Protective Orders

If any employee becomes aware of a court order that limits the disclosure of any administrative records, he or she should communicate the substance of such order, and provide a copy of the order to the Administrative Records Officer. Likewise, if the Administrative Records Officer is aware of any court order requiring the disclosure, nondisclosure, or preservation of any administrative records the Administrative Records Officer will notify the staff in possession of the requested information.

5. Requests Received by Division Employees

On occasion a requestor may direct a request for administrative records to a specific employee. In the event that an employee receives an administrative records request, the employee shall indicate to the requestor that they are not the designated person to receive such requests. The employee shall direct requestors to submit their request to the designated Administrative Records Officer, provide the contact information for the Administrative Records Officer to the requestor, and alert the Administrative Records Officer to expect an administrative records request.

6. Electronic Records

The Administrative Records Officer will work with the requestor to determine the appropriate format for providing responsive records. If records are requested with metadata intact, the Administrative Records

Officer will work with the County's Department of Information Services to provide records in native format, to the extent possible. If the request is for records that can best be provided through customized access to electronic records, the Administrative Records Officer shall work with the necessary staff that has responsive records to determine the appropriate means of response.


7. Tracking Administrative Records Requests

The Administrative Records Officer shall track administrative records requests and their related communications with requestors by logging all requests, responses, exemptions, and other communication regarding the requests.

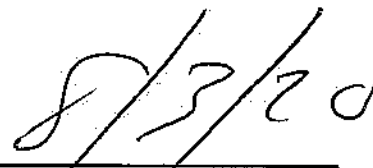
II. RESPONSIBILITIES:

- A. **All Court staff** must make every effort to comply with the letter and spirit of GR 31.1 and respond by the due date as provided by the Administrative Records Officer.
- B. **The Administrative Records Officer** shall coordinate the overall administrative records process, work with requestors to clarify requests, forward requests to judicial officers, judicial staff, or judicial agency employees, provide timely responses to requestors, and track all requests, exemptions, and responses.
- C. **Court staff** shall promptly forward administrative records requests received from the Administrative Records Officer to appropriate staff members, ensure that those staff members conduct a diligent search for responsive records in a timely manner, ensure that requested records are not destroyed pending any request for them. And timely provide division responses to the Administrative Records Officer.

III. **Effective Date:** This policy is effective August 3, 2020.



District Court, Presiding Judge



Date