

RCW 7.105.150 Service—Methods of service. (1) To minimize delays and the need for more hearings, which can hinder access to justice and undermine judicial economy, to lessen costs, to guarantee actual notice to the respondent, and to simplify and modernize processes for petitioners, respondents, law enforcement, and the courts, the following methods of service are authorized for protection order proceedings, including petitions, temporary protection orders, reissuances of temporary protection orders, full protection orders, motions to renew protection orders, and motions to modify or terminate protection orders.

(a) (i) Except as provided in (a) (iii) and (b) (i) of this subsection, personal service, consistent with court rules for civil proceedings, is required in: (A) Cases requiring the surrender of firearms, such as extreme risk protection orders and protection orders with orders to surrender and prohibit weapons; (B) cases that involve transferring the custody of a child or children from the respondent to the petitioner; (C) cases involving vacating the respondent from the parties' shared residence; (D) cases involving a respondent who is incarcerated; and (E) cases where a petition for a vulnerable adult protection order is filed by someone other than the vulnerable adult.

(ii) Personal service in cases specified in (a) (i) (A) through (D) of this subsection must be made by law enforcement including, at a minimum, two timely attempts at personal service. To reduce risk of harm for cases requiring personal service, law enforcement should continue to attempt personal service up to the hearing date. Personal service for cases specified in (a) (i) (E) of this subsection and when used for other protection order cases must be made by law enforcement unless the petitioner elects to have the respondent served by a third party who is not a party to the action, is 18 years of age or older and competent to be a witness, and can provide sworn proof of service to the court as required.

(iii) In cases where personal service is required under this subsection, after two unsuccessful attempts at personal service, service shall be permitted by electronic means in accordance with (b) of this subsection.

(b) (i) Service by electronic means, including service by email, text message, social media applications, or other technologies, must be prioritized for all orders at the time of the issuance of temporary protection orders, except in cases where personal service is required under (a) of this subsection. For cases specified in (a) (i) (A) through (D) of this subsection, once firearms and concealed pistol licenses have been surrendered and verified by the court, or there is evidence the respondent does not possess firearms, the restrained party has been vacated from the shared residence, or the custody of the child or children has been transferred, per court order, or the respondent is no longer incarcerated, then subsequent motions and orders may be served electronically.

(ii) Service by electronic means must be made by a law enforcement agency, unless the petitioner elects to have the respondent served by any person who is not a party to the action, is 18 years of age or older and competent to be a witness, and can provide sworn proof of service to the court as required. Court authorization permitting electronic service is not required except in cases specified in (a) (i) (A) through (D) of this subsection. In those cases, either request of the petitioner, or good cause for granting an order for electronic service, such as two failed attempts at personal

service, are required to authorize service by electronic means. No formal motion is necessary.

(iii) The respondent's email address, number for text messaging, and username or other identification on social media applications and other technologies, if known or available, must be provided by the petitioner to law enforcement in the confidential information form, and attested to by the petitioner as being the legitimate, current, or last known contact information for the respondent.

(iv) Electronic service must be effected by transmitting copies of the petition and any supporting materials filed with the petition, notice of hearing, and any orders, or relevant materials for motions, to the respondent at the respondent's electronic address or the respondent's electronic account associated with email, text messaging, social media applications, or other technologies. Verification of notice is required and may be accomplished through read-receipt mechanisms, a response, a sworn statement from the person who effected service verifying transmission and any follow-up communications such as email or telephone contact used to further verify, or an appearance by the respondent at a hearing. Sworn proof of service must be filed with the court by the person who effected service.

(c) Service by mail is permitted when: (i) Personal service was required, there have been two unsuccessful attempts at personal service, and electronic service is not possible; or (ii) personal service is not required and there have been two unsuccessful attempts at personal or electronic service. If electronic service and personal service are not successful, the court shall affirmatively order service by mail without requiring additional motions to be filed by the petitioner. Service by mail must be made by any person who is not a party to the action and is 18 years of age or older and competent to be a witness, by mailing copies of the materials to be served to the party to be served at the party's last known address or any other address determined by the court to be appropriate. Two copies must be mailed, postage prepaid, one by ordinary first-class mail and the other by a form of mail requiring a tracking or certified information showing when and where it was delivered. The envelopes must bear the return address where the petitioner may receive legal mail. Service is complete 10 calendar days after the mailing of two copies as prescribed in this section. Where service by mail is provided by a third party, the clerk shall forward proof of service by mail to the law enforcement agency in the county or municipality where the respondent resides.

(d) Service by publication is permitted only in those cases where all other means of service have been unsuccessful or are not possible due to lack of any known physical or electronic address of the respondent. Publication must be made in a newspaper of general circulation in the county where the petition was brought and in the county of the last known address of the respondent once a week for three consecutive weeks. The newspaper selected must be one of the three most widely circulated papers in the county. The publication of summons must not be made until the court orders service by publication under this section. Service of the summons is considered complete on the date of the third publication when publication has been made for three consecutive weeks. The summons must be signed by the petitioner. The summons must contain the date of the first publication, and shall require the respondent upon whom service by publication is desired to appear and answer the petition on the date set for the hearing. The summons must also contain a brief statement of the reason for the

petition and a summary of the provisions under the temporary protection order. The summons must be essentially in the following form:

In the court of the state of Washington
for the county of

....., Petitioner

vs.

No.

....., Respondent

The state of Washington to
(respondent):

You are hereby summoned to appear on the
day of, (year), at a.m./p.m., and
respond to the petition. If you fail to respond, a
protection order will be issued against you pursuant to
the provisions of chapter 7.105 RCW, for a minimum of
one year from the date you are required to appear. A
temporary protection order has been issued against you,
restraining you from the following: (Insert a brief
statement of the provisions of the temporary protection
order). A copy of the petition, notice of hearing, and
temporary protection order has been filed with the clerk
of this court.

.....

Petitioner

(2) The court may authorize multiple methods of service permitted by this section and may consider use of any address determined by the court to be appropriate in order to authorize service that is reasonably probable to provide actual notice. The court shall favor speedy and cost-effective methods of service to promote prompt and accessible resolution of the merits of the petition.

(3) To promote judicial economy and reduce delays, for respondents who are able to be served electronically, the respondent, or the parent or guardian of the respondent for respondents under the age of 18 or the guardian or conservator of an adult respondent, shall be required to provide his or her electronic address or electronic account associated with an email, text messaging, social media application, or other technology by filing the confidential party information form referred to in RCW 7.105.115(1). This must occur at the earliest point at which the respondent, parent, guardian, or conservator is in contact with the court so that electronic service can be effected for all subsequent motions, orders, and hearings.

(4) If an order entered by the court recites that the respondent appeared before the court, either in person or remotely, the necessity for further service is waived and proof of service of that order is not necessary, including in cases where the respondent leaves the hearing before a final ruling is issued or signed. The court's order, entered after a hearing, need not be served on a respondent who fails to appear before the court for the hearing, if material terms of the order have not changed from those contained in the temporary order, and it is shown to the court's satisfaction that the respondent has previously been served with the temporary order.

(5) When the respondent for a protection order is under the age of 18 or is an individual subject to a guardianship or conservatorship under Title 11 RCW:

(a) When the respondent is a minor, service of a petition for a protection order, modification, or renewal, shall be completed, as

defined in this chapter, upon both the respondent and the respondent's parent or legal guardian.

(b) A copy of the protection order must be served on a parent, guardian, or conservator of the respondent at any address where the respondent resides, or the department of children, youth, and families in the case where the respondent is the subject of a dependency or court approved out-of-home placement. A minor respondent shall not be served at the minor respondent's school unless no other address for service is known.

(c) For extreme risk protection orders, the court shall also provide a parent, guardian, or conservator of the respondent with written notice of the legal obligation to safely secure any firearm on the premises and the potential for criminal prosecution if a prohibited person were to obtain access to any firearm. This notice may be provided at the time the parent, guardian, or conservator of the respondent appears in court or may be served along with a copy of the order, whichever occurs first.

(6) When a petition for a vulnerable adult protection order is filed by someone other than the vulnerable adult, notice of the petition and hearing must be personally served upon the vulnerable adult. In addition to copies of all pleadings filed by the petitioner, the petitioner shall provide a written notice to the vulnerable adult using a standard notice form developed by the administrative office of the courts. The standard notice form must be designed to explain to the vulnerable adult in clear, plain language the purpose and nature of the petition and that the vulnerable adult has the right to participate in the hearing and to either support or object to the petition.

(7) The court shall not dismiss, over the objection of a petitioner, a petition for a protection order or a motion to renew a protection order based on the inability of law enforcement or the petitioner to serve the respondent, unless the court determines that all available methods of service have been attempted unsuccessfully or are not possible. [2022 c 268 s 9; 2021 c 215 s 18.]

Effective dates—2022 c 268: See note following RCW 7.105.010.