

# NEWS RELEASE

## SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA

### COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

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**RELEASE DATE:** March 16, 2020

## **SF Superior Court Announces Sweeping Operational Changes In Response To The Spread of The Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

**SAN FRANCISCO** -- Leadership of the San Francisco Superior Court released a plan today that will greatly reduce the number of courtrooms and staffing at its four public courthouses in response to the growing health crisis that will allow it to maintain essential functions and meet its statutory and constitutional obligations.

In an effort to minimize COVID-19 related risks to the public, court staff and the bench, the Court leaders sought an emergency order by California Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye that will allow it to suspend non-essential court operations, closing approximately 75 percent of its courtrooms, clerks' offices and the Court's ACCESS Center for 30 days. These measures are intended to reduce the number of jurors, parties, and attorneys in the Court for the time period of March 17 through April 15, 2020.

The Court's action is in response to Gov. Gavin Newsom's Executive Order mandating compliance with state and local public health guidelines and orders from the San Francisco Department of Public Health. As a result, the Court is implementing the following changes:

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**CRIMINAL**

- All jury trials currently set between Tuesday, March 17, and Wednesday, April 15, 2020, will be continued on a rolling basis for 30 days from the currently scheduled trial date.
- All preliminary examinations set between Tuesday, March 17, and Wednesday, April 15, 2020, will be continued on a rolling basis for 30 days.
- All arraignments will be heard within seven (7) days.
- The Clerk's Office will be closed during the period of Tuesday, March 17, through Wednesday, April 15, 2020. A drop box is available for motions near Room 103 of the Hall of Justice and will be checked throughout each court day.

**TRAFFIC**

- All traffic matters currently set between Tuesday, March 17, and Wednesday, April 15, 2020, will be continued on a rolling basis for 30 days. Notice of new hearing and trial dates will be mailed.
- Starting Tuesday, March 17, 2020, all traffic "walk-in" appearances will be suspended through Wednesday, April 15, 2020. Please do not come to court. Courtesy notices will be mailed with new due dates and further instructions. Tickets can be paid online at: <https://www.ncourt.com/x-press/x-onlinepayments.aspx?juris=5B7E609F-2C24-48A0-9DC1-19A46FD42FCD>
- The Traffic Office will be closed during the period of Tuesday, March 17, through Wednesday, April 15, 2020. A drop box is available for payments near Room 145 of the Hall of Justice and will be checked throughout each court day.

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**CIVIL**

- All civil trials currently set between Tuesday, March 17, and Wednesday, April 15, 2020, will be continued on a rolling basis for 90 days from the currently scheduled trial date.
- Law & Motion: all attorneys are encouraged to appear by telephone. Telephone appearances must be arranged through Court Call by calling 1-888-88-COURT. No prior notice or permission is required.
- All small claims motions, trials, and appeals will be continued to a future date. Notice of the new date will be mailed to all parties.
- The Clerk's Office will be closed during the period of Tuesday, March 17, through Wednesday, April 15, 2020. A drop box is available for new and subsequent filings in the lobby of the Civic Center Courthouse and will be checked throughout each court day.

**UNIFIED FAMILY COURT**

- All family law matters, including mediation, but excluding ex parte requests, temporary restraining orders, child abduction due process hearings, and domestic violence restraining orders where visitation or custody is an issue will be continued on a rolling basis for 30 days.
- Domestic violence restraining orders (DVRO) where visitation or custody is an issue will continue to be heard on Wednesday mornings at 8:30 a.m. in Department 403.
- All delinquency out-of-custody J-1 hearings, appearance progress reports, out-of-custody matters, sealing calendar, AB 12 review hearings, 827 petitions; and all out-of-custody Reentry Court, Youth and Family Court, and Wellness Court cases will be continued on a rolling basis for 30 days. All other hearings types may be continued on a case-by-case basis at the request of counsel via telephonic appearance.

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- All dependency J-1 hearings, settlement conferences, Family Maintenance Review Hearings, 366.26 Hearings, Post-Permanency Plan Hearings (366.3), and NMD Reviews, and 827 petitions will be continued on a rolling basis for 30 days. All other hearings types may be continued on a case-by-case basis at the request of counsel via telephonic appearance.
- Child support hearings will be continued on a rolling basis for at least 30 days. Any necessary hearings not continued or reset by the Court will be conducted by telephone. Notice to the parties will be provided by the [San Francisco Department of Child Support Services \(DCSS\)](#). DCSS may be contacted at (415) 356-2700.
- The Clerk's Office in Room 402 of the Civic Center Courthouse will be closed during the period of Tuesday, March 17, through Wednesday, April 15, 2020. A drop box is available for filings in the lobby of the Civic Center Courthouse and will be checked throughout each court day.
- The Clerk's Office in Room 101 of the Juvenile Justice Center will be closed during the period of Tuesday, March 17, through Wednesday, April 15, 2020. A drop box is available for filings near Room 101 of the Juvenile Justice Center and will be checked throughout each court day.

**JURY SERVICES**

- Anyone scheduled for jury service during the period of Tuesday, March 17, through Wednesday, April 15, 2020, will be rescheduled. Notice of rescheduled jury service dates will be mailed.

**ACCESS CENTER**

- The Court's ACCESS Center (self-help) will be closed for the period of Tuesday, March 17, through Wednesday, April 15, 2020. All in-person and telephone services will be suspended during this time.

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The Court is planning to keep fourteen courtrooms open for approximately the next 30 days, five at the Hall of Justice (Criminal), five at the Civic Center (Civil) and four within the Unified Family Court including one courtroom at the Juvenile Justice Center. Most of the civil court matters will be handled by telephone in order to reduce additional exposure to the public and court staff.

“Our goal is to ensure we continue to provide access to justice while also weighing the concerns of our staff, judicial officers and court users,” said Garrett L. Wong, Presiding Judge of the Superior Court. “We felt these steps were necessary to balance public safety and health while ensuring due process for our citizens as we seek to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus.”

Earlier last week the Court announced that it was continuing civil jury trials for 90 days from the date they were scheduled except in preference cases and trials already in progress. Family Law and Motion matters will be continued by agreement of the parties or at the discretion of the court. In-person Family Court Services orientations on the readiness calendar were cancelled. In the Probate Court, all in-person visits related to guardianship and conservatorship were suspended until April 15.

“A minimal amount of staff will be required to perform these functions,” said T. Michael Yuen, Court Executive Officer. “Management will solicit volunteers and make assignments accordingly.”

The Court will continue to monitor updates on the COVID-19 pandemic and evaluate and adjust operations accordingly. Please check the Court’s dedicated [COVID-19 web page](#) for ongoing updates and changes to operations.

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