



# NEWS RELEASE

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA • COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO  
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## Virtual Services Offered by the San Diego Superior Court *In-person services limited due to COVID-19 pandemic*

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person services at the San Diego Superior Court remain limited, but virtual hearings, workshops and other online services have increased.

### **Virtual Hearings**

Since the first San Diego Superior Court virtual hearing occurred on April 6 for a Criminal case and with the launch of remote hearings for Traffic cases on Friday, July 17, **more than 100 courtrooms are in use** across all case types.

More than 11,100 Traffic matters that were previously scheduled for in-person hearings are all being rescheduled for remote hearings.

Family law, civil restraining orders and unlawful detainer matters recently launched virtual hearings as well. Thirteen courtrooms that hear pre-trial criminal matters including arraignments and preliminary exams are equipped to livestream the hearings through links available at [sdcourt.ca.gov](http://sdcourt.ca.gov).

“In just three months, we’ve moved a significant amount of our operations to online or remote access and we continue to move full speed ahead in the interest of safely serving the needs of all San Diegans,” said Superior Court Presiding Judge Lorna Alksne. “Even with reducing the number of people physically coming into the courthouses, we have provided assistance and access to justice for thousands of people in these rapidly changing circumstances.”

### **Virtual Self-Help Services**

The Court’s Family Law Facilitator (FLF) can help individuals without an attorney by answering questions about family law issues and helping prepare court forms. In-person Family Law Facilitator assistance at the Central, North, East and South County Courthouses is limited to emergency restraining orders, but workshops and other services are now available online. Virtual divorce workshops are hosted daily in English and on Mondays in Spanish. Guardianship workshops are hosted on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Reservations for these workshops can be made online at [iflow.sdcourt.ca.gov](http://iflow.sdcourt.ca.gov). In addition to the workshops, almost all FLF services are available via telephone, videoconference or email and can be requested by filling out an [online questionnaire](#) or calling 619-844-2249.

Remote self-help services are also available by phone through the [Legal Aid Society of San Diego](#), [San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program](#), [Center for Community Solutions](#) and the Court’s [Small Claims Legal Advisor](#).

## **Virtual Community Outreach & Education**

Distance learning made visits to the courtroom and in-person presentations from judges impossible this spring, but adaptation to virtual visits was swift, particularly for the [Judges in the Classroom](#) program. Judges in the Classroom is a program developed by the Chief Justice's [Power of Democracy](#) Steering Committee to educate students on the judicial branch, the Constitution, rule of law, and related topics. The program launched in San Diego in 2018 with several Superior Court judges visiting 1<sup>st</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders throughout the county.

“The need for civic learning in schools has remained vital throughout the pandemic and many of our judges jumped at the chance to quickly shift the program to an interactive and engaging virtual format,” said Judge Carolyn Caietti, San Diego Superior Court judge and member of the statewide Power of Democracy Steering Committee. “Critical thinking is highlighted through real-world cases and explanations. This program has a lasting impact on the students and I am excited for us to bring judges into more classrooms in the coming school year.”

More than 580 students participated in 18 virtual Judges in the Classroom programs in May and June alone. By comparison, close to the same number of in-person presentations were held throughout the first half of school year. Teachers, including summer programs, may [request a Judge in the Classroom presentation online](#).

Beginning in the fall, the San Diego Superior Court will offer virtual tours for 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders. Tours will bring classes through the Central Courthouse, showing all aspects of a courtroom and ending with a demonstration of what happens during a trial.

For more information on the Court’s operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, please visit [sdcourt.ca.gov/coronavirus](https://sdcourt.ca.gov/coronavirus).

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