



NEWS RELEASE

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA • COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
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San Diego Superior Court Further Decreases Court Reporter Services In Family Court Proceedings

For the second time in five years, the San Diego Superior Court is reducing staff and services as it, once again, faces a shrinking budget. Those reductions mean court users will face changes in several areas including a further reduction in the services of court reporters provided at court expense in Family Court proceedings.

The Court has previously eliminated civil court reporters and greatly reduced the availability of court reporters in family law cases. Effective September 5, 2017, the Court will no longer provide official court reporters in family law matters for Domestic Violence Restraining Order hearings (“DVRO Hearings”) or for Request for Order hearings of 40 minutes or less (“RFO Hearings”).

This change applies to all DVRO and RFO Hearings held on or after September 5, 2017. The Court will establish a procedure for refunding court reporter deposits already made for these types of hearings in pending cases. If they see a need for an official record, litigants and attorneys will need to provide their own court reporter at their expense. Information on how to arrange and pay for a certified shorthand reporter where the Court does not provide one is posted on the Court Reporter page at www.sdcourt.ca.gov.

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“Our state funding does not cover what it takes to run the second largest court in the California. With no new money in state budget for court operations, reductions in current funding associated with continued implementation of the statewide judicial branch funding methodology, and increases in labor costs, we are facing a six million-dollar deficit. Courts are a “people driven” service. It takes a lot of people to ensure we have appropriate services levels. With salaries absorbing a majority of our budget, the only place we can cut is staffing. When you do that you have to find ways to continue to provide services with fewer people,” says Executive Officer Michael Roddy.

In addition to the change in Family Court and court reporters, the court is reducing more than 60 positions to meet its budget, including upper management and Court Commissioners.

Those cuts will result in the removal and consolidation of services over the next few months:

- Juvenile Dependency courtrooms and operations in South and Downtown Central will be closed and the cases currently handled there will be transferred to Juvenile Court in Kearny Mesa, Vista, or El Cajon, forcing families to drive further.
- One Juvenile Delinquency department in Kearny Mesa will be closed during the upcoming fiscal year, and the cases currently handled in that department will be transferred to other departments at Kearny Mesa.
- All Small Claims and Unlawful Detainer operations and courtrooms in North County will be closed and active cases will be transferred to downtown, resulting in North County litigants traveling to the downtown courthouse to settle disputes.

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“The judges of the San Diego Superior Court do not want to make these service reductions. Unfortunately, we have no choice. These changes impact some of the most vulnerable people we serve including families in crisis, small claims litigants and tenants and landlords. In previous budget cuts, we have tried to keep cuts from affecting families and children. Now, with continuing reductions in our budget we have nowhere else to reduce. Our budget is over \$30M lower than it was 9 years ago in 2008 despite increasing costs in all areas of operation” says Presiding Judge Jeffrey B. Barton.

Since 2012, the San Diego Superior Court has faced more than \$30 million in cuts and has reduced its workforce by nearly 20%. It has faced these budgetary changes by consolidating services or closing down entire operations such as the Ramona Courthouse.

The reductions come at the same time that the Court moves into a newly built 22-story facility downtown. The new Central Courthouse will consolidate three courthouses currently housing criminal, family and probate operations and courtrooms.

“The irony of this situation is this new building construction has no impact on our local operating budget. It is funded by small filing fee increases that cannot be used for operational costs. It was built by the State because of the serious seismic and security issues with the current facility so while we are moving into a new building we are facing an old and tired story of reduced funding and thus reduced services. One positive aspect of the new facility is it is our hope that by moving three court operations together we will find efficiencies that help us in our service efforts,” adds Judge Barton.

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