



San Diego Superior Court Service Modifications Following COVID-19

Updated March 8, 2022



Court Services During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in proclamations of states of emergency by federal, state, and local officials. The associated health and safety concerns, along with public health orders, caused substantial operational changes for the San Diego Superior Court.

On March 17, 2020, the San Diego Superior Court closed for all non-emergency services to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The emergency service limitation was in place through May 22, 2020, though many remote services were added throughout the closure time period. The San Diego Superior Court resumed most business operations on May 26, 2020, and, over the next year, increased public access while complying with all local, state and federal public health guidance.

This guide contains general information on courthouse operations and case-type specific information to assist those with active court cases.

The San Diego Superior Court recognizes that the pandemic is not over and will continue to closely monitor federal, state, and local public health directives related to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, and will continue to adjust procedures as needed. The available services detailed in this guide largely depend on policy-setting and guidance from the Judicial Council of California, and federal, state, and local officials. Information regarding public access, court facilities, and court services will be updated as needed.

Safety Precautions

The San Diego Superior Court is in compliance with relevant federal, state and local guidance related to COVID-19 safety precautions. Here's what to expect when visiting a local courthouse:

- In accordance with state and local public health guidance, facial coverings are optional, but recommended, for all individuals. Face coverings may be required, regardless of vaccination status, in some areas within the courthouses.
- Those who are not feeling well or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 are asked to stay home and seek assistance online, by telephone or via mail.
- As recommended, higher-rated MERV-13 (Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value) filters have been installed at all facilities to reduce airborne particles and fresh air circulation has been increased throughout the court facilities where possible.
- The Court continues to implement increased cleaning of all high-touch areas in the courthouses, including door handles and elevator buttons.
- Hand sanitizer remains widely available in public spaces within the courthouses.



Public Access



Business Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

(Drop boxes are available 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.)



Phone Hours:

8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

(contact numbers listed at sdcourt.ca.gov)

Drop boxes are available for your convenience.

**Come to the appropriate location to have your files
time-stamped and dropped off for processing. No need to wait!**



Central Courthouse Drop Boxes

- Family Law
- Probate

Hall of Justice Drop Boxes

(located at the second floor business office)

- Civil, including Small Claims

Kearny Mesa Traffic Facility Drop Box

(available 24/7 outside of the courthouse)

- Traffic Cases & Minor Offenses only

East County Regional Center Drop Boxes

(located on the ground floor)

- Civil (Restraining Orders only)
- Criminal
- Family Law
- Juvenile Dependency
- Traffic & Minor Offenses

North County Regional Center Drop Boxes

(located at the North & South buildings)

- Civil
- Criminal
- Family Law
- Probate
- Traffic & Minor Offenses

South County Regional Center Drop Boxes

(located on the second and third floors)

- Civil (Restraining Orders only)
- Criminal
- Family Law
- Traffic & Minor Offenses - payment drop box only, located on first and second floors

Juvenile Court Drop Boxes

- Juvenile Cases only, including Adoptions
- Appeals for Juvenile Cases

Jury Service

Jury service is gradually returning to pre-pandemic levels. Jurors called to serve in the Central Division in downtown San Diego are to report in-person with plans to accommodate 4-5 trials per day. Jurors called to serve at the North, East or South County courthouses remain on telephone standby, calling in for five days to learn if they will need to report in-person the next business day.

Court Appearances

Depending on the case type, virtual hearings may still be available for future dates. Out-of-custody criminal defendants and traffic or minor offense defendants may have the option to attend their hearings in person or remotely. Small claims cases will also be held in-person or remotely. Select other Civil, Family, and Probate hearings may be available in-person, virtually or in a hybrid format. Please refer to each case type for specific details.



Public Access

Access to Court Records

Research, including Background/Records Checks:

Dedicated phone lines have been established for researchers which has reduced wait times for the general public for research requests and other inquiries. Phone hours are 8:30-11:30 a.m.

- Phone number for researchers: 619-844-2024
- Phone numbers for public requests:
 - Central Division: 619-844-2400
 - North County Division: 760-201-8600
 - East County Division: 619-456-4100
 - South County Division: 619-746-6200



Copies of Court Records:

The Court is working to develop an information technology solution to allow requests for both certified and non-certified copies of non-confidential Family records to be made and paid for online. In the meantime, customers may [mail requests or come in person to the business offices](#) for copies of court records across all case types. Select Civil, Probate and Small Claims documents can be downloaded from the online Register of Actions. Large copy requests may be required to be dropped off.

Research Kiosks:

- Register of Actions kiosks (Civil, Probate, and Small Claims cases):
 - Hall of Justice – Civil Business Office (2nd floor)
 - Central Courthouse – Probate Business Office (3rd floor)
 - East County – Family Business Office (1st floor)
 - North County – Family/Civil Business Office, South Building (1st floor)
 - South County – near the Family Business Office (3rd floor)
- Odyssey kiosks (Family and Traffic cases):
 - Central Courthouse – Family Business Office (4th floor)
 - East County – Business Office (1st floor)
 - North County – Family/Civil Business Office, South Building (1st floor) - Family cases only; and Traffic Annex Building Lobby - Traffic cases only
 - South County – near the Family Business Office (3rd floor)
 - Kearny Mesa Traffic Facility - Traffic cases only
- Court Index kiosks
 - Hall of Justice – Civil Business Office (2nd floor)
 - Central Courthouse – Criminal Business Office (1st floor) and Family Business Office (4th floor)
 - East County – Business Office (1st floor)
 - North County – Family/Civil Business Office, South Building (1st floor) and Criminal Business Office, North Building (1st floor)
 - South County – 2nd and 3rd floors
- Older Records kiosks (Civil, Criminal, and Family cases)
 - Hall of Justice – Civil Business Office (2nd floor)
 - Central Courthouse – Older Records Office (14th floor) and Family Business Office (4th floor)
 - East County – Business Office (1st floor)

Access to Exhibits

To request access to exhibits for any Superior Court location, contact the Superior Court's Exhibits Department to **make an appointment**:

- Central Courthouse: 619-844-2574
- North County Regional Center: 760-201-8285
- East County Regional Center: 619-456-4240
- South County Regional Center: 619-746-6198
- Juvenile Court: 858-634-1608

More
information
by case type:

Civil

Criminal

Family

Juvenile

Probate

Traffic
& Minor
Offenses

Appeals

Civil

Locations

- Restraining Orders – Hall of Justice, East County, North County, and South County Regional Centers
- Limited and Unlimited – Hall of Justice and North County Regional Center
- Small Claims – Hall of Justice
- Unlawful Detainer – Hall of Justice
- Name or Gender Change – Hall of Justice and North County Regional Center



Restraining Orders

Civil harassment, elder/dependent abuse, gun violence and workplace violence restraining orders requests are accepted in person and can be filed in the Civil Division in the Hall of Justice and North County Regional Center, and at the Family Court business offices at the East and South County Regional Centers. They should be filed in the location where the harassment took place or where the person to be restrained lives. Refer to [this list](#) for filing location information by zip code. Domestic Violence restraining orders should be filed in the Family Court at the location closest to you. For more information on the types of restraining orders, please visit sdcourt.ca.gov/Civil.

Civil restraining order hearings can be held in-person or remotely.

Find more information about civil restraining order virtual hearings on the Court's website at sdcourt.ca.gov/Civil.

Self-Help Services for Restraining Orders

Assistance with petitions for civil harassment and elder abuse restraining orders is available in-person at courthouse walk-in clinics through the Legal Aid Society of San Diego (LASSD) and San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program (SDVLP). Assistance is free and provided on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information on self-help services available to the public, please visit sdcourt.ca.gov/SelfHelp

Small Claims Cases

A small claims case is a limited civil case asking for \$10,000 or less. Small claims cases may be filed at the Hall of Justice, where the following services are available:

- The following filings are accepted at the counter:
 - Dismissals
 - Notice of Change of Address
 - Satisfaction of Judgment
- All other documents are to be time-stamped and dropped in the Drop Box
- Payment of Judgment to the Court
- Viewing of case files, including copies and certifications

Small claims hearings may take place with parties appearing in-person or remotely.

Find more information about small claims virtual hearings at sdcourt.ca.gov/Civil.

Self-Help Services for Small Claims cases

The Small Claims Legal Advisory is only offering remote assistance at this time. **You are encouraged to seek assistance from the Small Claims Legal Advisory before filing paperwork and/or visiting the courthouse.** Services are provided at no cost.

Small Claims Legal Advisory

- Speak to an attorney or paralegal who can explain procedures and assist you with preparing your forms.
- SCLA will transmit your completed forms to you by email
- 858-634-1777
 - Phone Hours: Monday – Friday
 - 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
 - 1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- Help is available in English & Spanish

Civil

Limited & Unlimited Civil Cases

E-Filing is available and mandatory for all limited and unlimited cases where parties are represented by attorneys. Find more details at sdcourt.ca.gov/Civil.

In-person services currently available at the Hall of Justice:

The following filings are accepted at the counter:

- Temporary Restraining Orders (Civil Harassment, Elder Abuse, Workplace Violence, Emergency Protective Order, etc.) and related filings
- Claims of Right to Possession or Third Party Claims of Right to Possession
- Ex parte papers for Department 60 (Central Division only)
- Abatement Warrants
- Writ of Election
- Petition for Change of Name
- Unlawful Detainer Answers filed by pro per litigants (self-represented) only
- All other documents to be time-stamped and dropped in a Drop Box

Viewing of case files, including copies and certifications

Attorney Service messenger pick up and drop off in lockers



In-person services currently available at the North County Courthouse:

The following filings are accepted at the counter:

- Temporary Restraining Orders (Civil Harassment, Elder Abuse, Workplace Violence, Emergency Protective Order, etc.) and related filings
- Abatement Warrants
- Petition for Name Change
- All other documents to be time-stamped and dropped in a Drop Box

Viewing of case files, including copies and certifications

Attorney Service messengers pick up and drop off in lockers

Process for Scheduling an Ex Parte Hearing

For cases assigned to a Civil Independent Calendar (IC) department, you must call the calendar clerk for the department in which your case is assigned. Please refer to the [Court's website for department calendar clerk phone numbers](#). Independent Calendar departments include:

- Hall of Justice: Departments 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, and 75
- North County Regional Center: Departments N-27, N-28, N-29, and N-31

For Civil Independent Calendar departments, ex parte hearings can be held in person or may be held remotely using MS Teams. When scheduling an ex parte, please inquire with the Independent Calendar Clerk on how to appear for your hearing. If appearing remotely, visit the [Civil Independent Calendar Virtual Hearings](#) page on the Court's website for more information on how to appear via MS Teams.

For Non-Independent Calendar departments, you must call the Civil Business Office in the location to which your case is assigned. For Central, the phone number is 619-450-7371. For North County, the phone number is 760-201-8243. Non-Independent Calendar departments are conducting ex parte hearings in person or using MS Teams. Please visit the Court's COVID-19 information page for MS Teams links and phone numbers.

Motions

Reservations for most Civil Independent Calendar Department motions may be made using the Court's [Reserve a Motion Date application](#) which can be accessed from sdcourt.ca.gov/Civil or using the "Reserve a Civil Motion Date" icon on the Court's homepage under Online Services.

[Limited Civil](#) and [Civil Independent Calendar](#) hearings may take place with parties appearing in-person or remotely. Find more information about these hearings at sdcourt.ca.gov/Civil.

Civil

Unlawful Detainer Cases

Unlawful detainer cases, also called evictions, involve a lawsuit in which a landlord tries to evict a tenant because, according to the landlord, the tenant no longer has the right to live on the property. Unlawful detainer cases may be filed at the Hall of Justice.

Due to the COVID-19 emergency, government directives and orders are rapidly changing. For the most current information regarding moratoriums on evictions enacted by local governments, please consult your city's website or the County of San Diego website if you live in an unincorporated area of the county.

Self-Help Services for Unlawful Detainer (Landlord-Tenant) cases

Assistance with landlord-tenant matters is available in-person at courthouse walk-in clinics through the Legal Aid Society of San Diego (LASSD) and San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program (SDVLP). Assistance is free and provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

Legal Aid Society of San Diego (LASSD)

- Legal Aid assists tenants with answers and ex-parte requests to stay a lockout in landlord-tenant matters. They do not assist with requests for eviction.
- Hall of Justice, 2nd Floor, Room 251
- Clinic Walk-In Hours:
 - Monday – Friday
 - 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program (SDVLP)

- North County Regional Center, South Building, 1st Floor
- Apply for assistance online by filling out the Landlord/Tenant Help Request Form at sdvlp.org
- Clinic Walk-In Hours:
 - Monday – Friday
 - 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
 - 1:30 to 5:00 p.m.

Unlawful detainer motion hearings can take place with parties appearing in-person or remotely. Find more information about unlawful detainer virtual hearings on the Court's website at sdcourt.ca.gov/Civil.

Criminal

Locations

- Central Courthouse
- East County Regional Center
- North County Regional Center
- South County Regional Center



Out-of-custody defendants may have the option to attend their scheduled hearings as follows:

- Attend the hearing in-person in the courtroom with the judge physically present.
- Attend virtually via MS Teams video conference.
- Waive your personal appearance ([PC 977](#)) and allow your attorney to appear on your behalf.

Find more information about out-of-custody virtual hearings at sdcourt.ca.gov/Criminal.

Family & Family Support Division

Locations

- Central Courthouse
- East County Regional Center
- North County Regional Center
- South County Regional Center



Select Family hearings may be available in-person, virtual or in a hybrid format. Find more information about Family Law virtual hearings at sdcourt.ca.gov/Family.

E-Filing for Family Law matters is available. Documents may be filed electronically in actions for divorce, legal separation, annulment, parentage, child custody, visitation, support (child and spousal), and family-related issues. Find more information at the Family Law e-Filing link at sdcourt.ca.gov/Family.

Courtesy copies will no longer be required or accepted by the Family and Family Support Division Business Offices.

New Petition and Request for Order in person at the counter filings are limited to two cases per transaction.

Requesting an Emergency Family Ex Parte Order

If a person needs to request an emergency family ex parte order, they should submit their Ex Parte Application and Order – Family Law Form (SDSC Form [#D-046](#)) and supporting ex parte paperwork including a Request for Order Form (JC Form [#FL-300](#)), if applicable, and a Credit Card Payment Form (SDSC Form [#ADM-253](#)) to the Family Business Office at the appropriate location. Check payments will also be accepted, but there should be two separate checks submitted at the time of filing the ex parte paperwork if accompanied by a Request for Order (one check for the Ex Parte Application and one check for the Request for Order and Court Reporter Fee).

Upon receipt of the paperwork, the clerk will set the matter for a hearing date and time. Paperwork received by noon will be scheduled for the following day. Notice must be provided by the moving party to the responding party in the case 24 hours prior to the scheduled hearing date and time. The documents must be served by 2 p.m. the court day prior to the hearing. Ex parte hearings will be set for 1:30 p.m. the following day (Monday through Friday) for each Department including the Family Support Division. Opposition paperwork may be filed at the designated Family Business Office at the appropriate location no later than 10 a.m. on the day of the designated hearing date. Parties will be instructed to return to the designated Family Business Office or courthouse lobby to pick up their paperwork after 3:30 p.m.

Effective June 16, 2021, ex parte hearings will be conducted via MS Teams or in person. For further appearance information, please visit sdcourt.ca.gov/Family.

Self-Help Services for Domestic Violence Restraining Orders

Assistance with petitions for a domestic violence restraining order is available in-person at courthouse walk-in clinics through the San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program, Legal Aid Society of San Diego, and Center for Community Solutions. Services are free and provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information on self-help services available to the public, please visit sdcourt.ca.gov/SelfHelp



Family Law Facilitator Services

The Court's Family Law Facilitator's Office (FLF) helps unrepresented parents and parties who have questions about family law issues at no cost.

Services available in person at the courthouse locations:

- Assist with forms to request domestic violence restraining orders
- FLF staff can provide a review of completed paperwork before documents are filed

Services available remotely:

- Telephone assistance for questions and referrals to online resources for assistance with forms
- Request remote assistance via the Online Questionnaire: sdcourt.ca.gov/Family
- Case Status Conferences are conducted daily by telephone. FLF staff will call between 8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. for the morning calendar and between 1:30 - 5 p.m. for the afternoon calendar. Respondents (not the party who filed the initial divorce paperwork) who have not filed a Response can request a status conference call by calling 619-844-2049 and leaving their telephone number and court case number.
- Workshops:
 - The Divorce Workshop is now posted online at sdcourt.ca.gov/Family under Self Help Services/ Family Law Facilitator. For follow-up questions, you can sign up for a Video Chat (Zoom) or bring the documents in for review.
 - Spanish divorce workshops are being conducted by video conference (Zoom) every Monday, scheduled through the Central Division only.
 - Finish My Case judgment workshops are being conducted by video conference (Zoom) every Tuesday for defaults and every Thursday (North) and Friday (all other locations) for settlements.
 - Guardianship workshops are being conducted by video conference (Zoom) on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
 - Online Workshop Registration: iflow.sdcourt.ca.gov



Family Court Services

Prior to a Family Court Services session, parties are to review the orientation video available online at sdcourt.ca.gov/Family under the Custody & Visitation link and review the Family Court Services' Child Custody Recommending Counseling Information Sheet ([FCS-022](#)).

In-person interviews for minor marriage petitions from Juvenile are conducted at the Central Courthouse Family Court Services office.



Juvenile

Locations

- Juvenile Court
- East County Regional Center
- North County Regional Center



Most juvenile hearings are being held virtually via MS Teams. Select juvenile justice and juvenile dependency hearings are being conducted in-person. Please contact the Juvenile Business Office for more information.

Probate

Locations

- Central Courthouse
- North County Regional Center



E-Filing for Probate matters is available and mandatory for individuals who are represented by an attorney. Find more information at the Probate e-Filing link at sdcourt.ca.gov/Probate.

Court appearances may be made in-person or remotely via Microsoft Teams telephone or video conference, unless otherwise ordered by the Court. Visit sdcourt.ca.gov/Probate for more information.

Self-Help Services for Guardianship and Conservatorship Cases

Court-based legal service providers including the Family Law Facilitator (FLF) and Legal Aid Society of San Diego (LASSD) offer assistance in select probate matters. Providers are attorneys and legal professionals who can explain procedures and prepare your forms. Services are provided at no cost.

Family Law Facilitator – Guardianship Cases

Guardianship workshops are being conducted by video conference (Zoom) twice-weekly (Tuesdays and Thursdays).

- Register Online: iflow.sdcourt.ca.gov
- Register by Phone: 619-844-2869

Legal Aid Society of San Diego (LASSD) – Conservatorship Cases

- Central Courthouse (1100 Union Street, San Diego 92101), 5th floor, Room 541
- Clinic Walk-In Hours:
 - Tuesday/Thursday
 - 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Legal Services for Probate Guardianship of the Person:

If you are seeking or objecting to guardianship, seeking to terminate a guardianship, or seeking visitation or other orders in a guardianship, and are low income, you may qualify for assistance through the San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program.

San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program (SDVLP)

Remote assistance is available by phone and video conference. SDVLP will prepare your forms and mail or email them to you to print at home, or SDVLP can e-file your forms with the court

- 619-235-5656, Ext. 111
- Apply for assistance online by filling out the Guardianship Legal Assistance Request Form at sdvlp.org



Traffic & Minor Offenses

Locations

- Kearny Mesa Traffic Court
- East County Regional Center
- North County Regional Center
- South County Regional Center



Traffic and Minor Offense defendants may have the option to attend their scheduled hearings as follows:

- Attend the hearing in-person in the courtroom.
- Attend virtually via video or telephone conference.
- Waive your personal appearance ([PC 977](#)) and allow your attorney to appear on your behalf.

Find more information about virtual Traffic and Minor Offense hearings at sdcourt.ca.gov/Traffic.

Online Services: **sdcourt.ca.gov/Traffic**

[Pay your bail or fine online](#)

[Request a 30-day extension](#)

[Request traffic school](#)

[Set up a payment plan or make a payment](#)



If you receive a “time out” error when trying to process a payment online and are using Google Chrome as your web browser, that may be the problem. Try using a different web browser and see if that corrects the issue. If the problem persists, you can mail your payment to the address indicated on your citation.

Financial Hardship and Inability to Pay

If you have a financial hardship and can show that you are unable to pay the full amount for the offenses on your traffic ticket, find more information on the options available to you on the Court’s website at sdcourt.ca.gov/Traffic.

Appeals

Location

- Central Courthouse



All Appeals documents can be filed at the Appeals Business Office in the Central Courthouse

Notices of Appeals can be filed at the Central Courthouse or can be dropped off at the courthouse where the case was originally heard and the documents will be routed to the Central Courthouse for processing.

E-Filing is available for Appeals matters in Unlimited Civil, Limited Civil (including Unlawful Detainer appeals), and Probate case types.

Appellate Division virtual oral arguments continue to be heard remotely in misdemeanor, limited civil, traffic and infraction appeals cases. Find more information about virtual oral arguments being heard in the Appellate Division at sdcourt.ca.gov/Appeals.

For information about cases being heard in the Court of Appeals, please visit courts.ca.gov/4dca.

How to Appear for Your Hearing

In certain circumstances, the San Diego Superior Court may allow appearances for hearings to be either in-person or remote.

To appear for your hearing in-person, please arrive at the courthouse at least 30 minutes before your scheduled hearing and report directly to the assigned courtroom.

If remote appearances are authorized for your hearing, you can attend the hearing by video conference using the free Microsoft Teams App:

- Using a desktop computer or laptop: click [here](#) to access a tip sheet on how to download Microsoft Teams to your computer or click [here](#) to view a step-by-step video.
- Using a smartphone mobile device or tablet: click [here](#) to access a tip sheet on how to download Microsoft Teams to your mobile device or click [here](#) to view a step-by-step video.

If you don't have a computer or smartphone, Microsoft Teams hearings can be accessed by calling the corresponding conference call phone number.

Case-specific instructions for attending hearings:

Civil - sdcourt.ca.gov/Civil

- [Civil Restraining Order Hearings](#)
(excluding Domestic Violence Restraining Orders - see Family)
- [Limited Civil Hearings](#)
- [Civil Independent Calendar Hearings](#)
- [Small Claims Hearings](#)
- [Small Claims Trial de Novo Hearings \(Small Claims Appeals\)](#)
- [Unlawful Detainer Hearings](#)

Criminal - sdcourt.ca.gov/Criminal

- Contact your attorney for details on pending criminal cases
- [Criminal Hearings](#)

Family - sdcourt.ca.gov/Family

- [Family Law Hearings](#)
(including Domestic Violence Restraining Orders)

Juvenile - sdcourt.ca.gov/Juvenile

- Contact your attorney for details on pending juvenile cases

Probate - sdcourt.ca.gov/Probate

- [Probate Hearings](#)

Traffic - sdcourt.ca.gov/Traffic

- [Traffic & Minor Offense Hearings](#)

Appeals - sdcourt.ca.gov/Appeals

- [Appellate Division Oral Arguments](#)
- [Appellate Division Traffic Arguments](#)

