

DEC 31 2020

By: A. Husted, Deputy

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SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
CENTRAL DIVISION

IN RE: RESTRICTED PUBLIC ACCESS) **GENERAL ORDER OF THE PRESIDING**
) **DEPARTMENT**
) **ORDER NO. 010121-39**
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As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governor of California declared a state of emergency in this state. The President of the United States has also declared a national emergency. The pandemic continues to cause significant health and safety concerns nationally, throughout the State of California, and in San Diego County.

In response to the pandemic, the court was closed to the public and suspended services, except for certain time-sensitive and essential functions, from March 17 to May 22, 2020. (See General Orders of the Presiding Department, Order Numbers 031820-34, 040320-39, and 043020-47.) The court resumed most services on May 26, 2020; however, with community spread of COVID-19 still a concern, many services were provided remotely or in the lobby area of each courthouse, and all courthouses and courtrooms remained closed to the public with limited exceptions for those seeking or participating in certain urgent emergency services.

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1 The court plans to continue providing as many services as possible, including most hearings,
2 remotely. However, beginning September 10, 2020, the court opened public access to certain
3 portions of its facilities with capacity limits to allow for adequate social distancing. Although some
4 personnel will remain in the lobbies, the following locations, which may be amended from time to
5 time, will be accessible to persons with court business:

- 6 • Central Courthouse: 1st through 4th Floors (Business Offices) and 14th Floor (Central
7 Records)
- 8 • Hall of Justice: 1st and 2nd Floors (Business Offices)
- 9 • Kearny Mesa Traffic Court
- 10 • East County Regional Center: Ground and 1st Floors (Business Offices)
- 11 • North County Regional Center: South Building Lobby, North Building and Annex
12 (Business Offices)
- 13 • South County Regional Center: 1st through 3rd Floors (Business Offices)
- 14 • Juvenile Court: 1st and 2nd Floors (Business Offices)

15 The court will continue to update its website (www.sdcourt.ca.gov) with information
16 regarding which in-person services and facilities are available.

17 Also on September 10, 2020, the court began hearing certain out-of-custody criminal
18 matters in addition to the remote hearings already being conducted for other case types. The court
19 has established Audio/Visual Access Rooms in each courthouse, which will enable hearing
20 participants who do not have access to a computer or smartphone to come to a courthouse and use
21 the court's equipment for their scheduled hearing.

22 For those who must enter the court's facilities, the court will comply with the guidance from
23 county, state, and federal health authorities, including, but not limited to, conducting temperature
24 screenings, requiring face coverings, enforcing social distancing, continuing increased cleaning
25 measures, and providing hand sanitizer kiosks.

26 For good cause and pursuant to the court's inherent supervisory and administrative
27 authority, as well as the Presiding Judge's duty to promote access to justice for all members of the
28 public, taking into account the needs of the public and court as they relate to the efficient and

1 effective management of the court (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 10.603), and in order to protect the
2 health and safety of the public, court personnel, judicial officers, parties, attorneys, witnesses, and
3 law enforcement officers, this court HEREBY FINDS AND ORDERS AS FOLLOWS:

4 Until further notice, access to any and all San Diego Superior Court courthouses shall be
5 authorized and restricted as follows:

6 a. Physical access to any and all courthouses, courtrooms, business offices, and public
7 areas shall be restricted at all times to persons with court business if such services are being
8 provided in person.

9 b. In-person access to any and all court proceedings, including Audio/Visual Access
10 Rooms, shall be limited to judges, commissioners, court staff, jurors, parties, attorneys, witnesses
11 subpoenaed to testify, one support person statutorily permitted to accompany a person seeking a
12 temporary restraining order, one assistant or support person if granted in response to an ADA
13 request, and other authorized persons. The term "other authorized persons" includes, but is not
14 limited to, news reporters and news media representatives subject to prior approval pursuant to the
15 procedures outlined in the California Rules of Court, the San Diego Superior Court Rules, San
16 Diego Superior Court General Order of the Presiding Department, Order Number 010121-02, or any
17 other applicable rule, order, or policy. Once the court resumes in-person jury trials, in-person
18 access to members of the public will be determined on a case-by-case basis consistent with court
19 policy and county, state, and federal public health guidance; however, remote public access will
20 continue to be available, subject to applicable rules and procedures.

21 c. In-person access shall be subject to county, state, and federal public health guidance and
22 other general orders of this court, including, but not limited to, social-distancing, face-covering, and
23 screening requirements.

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d. This order does not restrict or otherwise abrogate the express and inherent authority of the court and its judges to provide for the orderly conduct of proceedings, including the decision to permit or deny access to any courtroom or hallways adjacent to courtrooms.

THIS ORDER IS EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY AND WILL REMAIN IN EFFECT UNTIL OTHERWISE ORDERED BY THE PRESIDING JUDGE.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

DATED: December 31, 2020



**HONORABLE LORNA A. ALKSNE
PRESIDING JUDGE**