



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

LOCATING AND SERVING A DEFENDANT (SMALL CLAIMS) - INFORMATION

Locating and Serving a Defendant

After a Small Claims case is filed, the plaintiff must have someone at least 18-years-old (not the plaintiff or anyone else listed in the case) deliver, or serve, a copy of the case to all defendants. See more information about serving a defendant in the How to Serve a Defendant (Small Claims) – Information (SDSC Form #058). A defendant may be served anywhere in the state of California, including locations such as at the defendant's home or work, on a public street, at a social gathering or event, etc. Below are some suggestions for locating and serving a defendant.

1. If the defendant owns real property, the Office of the County Recorder at (619) 236-3771 may be able to provide an address. Tell the representative the name of the defendant and that you are looking for address information for any real property owned by the defendant in San Diego County. In the event the defendant has real property, the County Recorder will give you the real property addresses listed under the defendant's name.
2. If you know the name of the defendant's spouse, the County Recorder may be able to provide address information listed under the spouse's name. After getting this information, you may want to check these real property locations to see if the defendant lives at any of them.
3. If the defendant owns a business located in San Diego County, and that business has a fictitious business name (meaning the business name does not contain the defendant's last name), check the address listing that the defendant filed with the Fictitious Business Registry. The Registry is located at the Office of the County Recorder, at 1600 Pacific Highway, San Diego, CA 92101. The defendant may have listed a home address on his or her business filing.
4. You have the option of serving the defendant using substituted service. Under this option, a copy of the case is left at the defendant's residence with someone who is at least 18-years-old and lives there as well. There are additional requirements for this type of service; see more information in the How to Serve a Defendant (Small Claims) - Information (SDSC Form #SC-058).
5. If you know the location of the defendant's place of work, your server may leave a copy of the case with someone at the place of work who appears to be in charge, and who is at least 18-years-old. There are additional requirements for this type of service; see more information in the How to Serve a Defendant (Small Claims) - Information (SDSC Form #SC-058).
6. There are numerous websites that provide name-search capabilities, including address and phone number information, which may be available for free.
7. If you know the defendant's landline or cell phone number, you may attempt a reverse look-up on various people-search websites to find the defendant's address.
8. Keep in mind that the address where you serve the defendant is not required to match the defendant's address that you listed on the Plaintiff's Claim and Order to Go to Small Claims Court (JC Form #SC-100). You may serve the defendant **anywhere** in the state of California—at the beach, at a baseball game, on a street, etc.; wherever you can locate him or her.
9. In the event you know where the defendant's family or friends are located and the defendant is visiting them, your server may give the documents directly to the defendant at that location.

The crucial factor for service is to get the defendant served with the case ANYWHERE in the state of California or outside the state **only** if an exception to the requirement that service be conducted within the state applies, as explained in the How to Serve a Defendant (Small Claims) - Information (SDSC Form #SC-058).