

Monday, March 16, 2020 8:40 AM

Subject: Message to the bar

Dear Members of the Sacramento Legal Community:

As the Presiding Judge of the Sacramento Superior Court, I provide this message regarding the status of our court's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to its impact on court operations and access to the court system. As you know, the current situation remains tremendously fluid and as a result, our response continues to adjust and evolve accordingly. Our Executive Team and our internal task force formed to respond to this crisis are in frequent contact with the Sacramento County Public Health Department. At this moment, essential court operations remain functional. However, this could change rapidly.

The ability of the court to remain open to the public is significantly dependent upon our ability to implement protocols that minimize the risk of exposure to both our staff and the public. Consistent with the guidance from the California Department of Public Health and the Sacramento County Public Health Department, our focus in minimizing risk of exposure has included maximizing sanitation throughout court buildings; taking action to reduce significantly the number of people entering court buildings each day; and following guidance from the California Department of Health as it relates to "social distancing." Our primary objective is to take steps to ensure that the courthouses are safe for jurors, litigants, lawyers, employees and all members of the public.

The implementation of these protocols, and in particular, the reduction in the number of people entering court buildings, will undoubtedly impact litigants in both civil and criminal cases. For instance, we have taken steps to reduce substantially the number of prospective jurors entering the courthouse each day and have adjusted the times that they arrive. This will directly impact and decrease the number of jury trials that may occur at any one time. We are examining other means of reducing the number of people entering our courthouses on non-jury matters as well. We are also encouraging parties to utilize telephonic appearances whenever possible and appropriate. We ask that you check with your specific department in this regard.

The safety of the public and our employees is our paramount concern. At the same time, we recognize that the Sacramento Superior Court is an essential institution of government upon which the public relies for access to justice, public safety, and the orderly resolution of conflicts. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation during this period. We will communicate any further updates.

Best regards,

Russell L. Hom
Presiding Judge



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Presiding Judge

Superior Court of California, County of Sacramento

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