



**AMANDA TOSTE**  
Court Executive Officer

## Superior Court of California, County of Merced

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 21, 2020

### **Merced Superior Court Modifies Operations**

On March 17, 2020, the Merced Superior Court (Court) announced its plan to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19, which included a number of court operational changes. On March 21, 2020 the Court announced further operational changes. Court administration has been carefully monitoring the advice of public, state and federal health officials regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the ongoing risks presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Court will be modifying its response by extending and expanding remote judicial proceedings to continue to protect the health and safety of our community.

The goal of the Merced Superior Court during this unprecedented situation is to protect the safety, health and welfare of court customers, jurors and staff. To this end, we request that individuals refrain from visiting the Court whenever possible. Clerk's Offices remain open. Effective Monday, November 2, 2020, Clerk's Offices will be open from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm with the exception of Merced Traffic which will be open from 7:30 am to 3:00 pm.

**Court operations will continue with remote appearances strongly encouraged. Entry to court facilities are subject to screening requirements.**

1. Only parties, including witnesses, and attorneys required to appear in a court hearing will be permitted to enter the court facilities on the day of the hearing after submitting to screening and absent any signs of illness. Do not bring friends or family members with you as they will not be permitted inside the buildings.
2. Limited seating is available for in-person observations of criminal jury trials. Additional limited accommodations are available for remote trial observations.
3. All persons entering the court facilities shall wear a face covering or face mask while in any Merced Court facility unless otherwise ordered by a judicial officer.
4. All persons entering a Merced Court facility shall submit to a non-invasive temperature screening process and/or declaration and SHALL NOT enter if a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher is detected. Those not permitted to enter the court facilities should contact their attorney or the clerk's office if not represented by an attorney.

5. Do not come to the court if you are ill and experiencing flu-like symptoms or have a fever or cough. Do not come to the court if you have a scheduled appointment for COVID testing, have tested positive or likely have COVID-19. Do not come to the court if you've been exposed to someone who has tested positive or are in quarantine. If you are represented by an attorney, please contact your attorney prior to coming to court to determine whether you need to appear in person. In most instances, your attorney can appear for you. If you do not have an attorney, you may contact the Clerk's Offices listed below. Telephones will be answered Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
  - Civil Office (including Juvenile Dependency) – (209) 725-4111
  - Criminal Office – (209) 725-4113
  - Family Law Office – (209) 725-4117
  - Juvenile Delinquency – (209) 725-4119
  - Los Banos – (209) 725-4124
  - Traffic Office – (209) 725-4107
  
6. Remote appearances are strongly encouraged, and may be required in some courtrooms, to prevent exposure to and the spread of COVID-19. The Court has established video conferencing in all courtrooms and will continue to livestream public judicial proceedings on the Court's website at [www.mercedcourt.org](http://www.mercedcourt.org).

### **Operations Update**

#### **Civil Operations (including Juvenile Dependency) – (209) 725-4111**

- Clerk's Office hours: 8:00 am – 3:00 pm
- Courtroom 8 combined with Courtroom 10 (Unlimited Civil, Juvenile Dependency and Probate) will continue with hearings as scheduled in Courtroom 10. Remote proceedings only, no in-person appearances.
- Courtroom 9 - Limited Civil and Small Claims hearings will continue as scheduled. Remote appearances are strongly encouraged and in-person access is limited to allow for social distancing.

#### **Criminal Operations – (209) 725-4113**

- Clerk's Office hours: 8:00 am – 3:00 pm
- Courtrooms 1, 2, 3 and 6 –Felony/Specialty Criminal calendars will continue as scheduled. Remote appearances are strongly encouraged with in-person appearances allowed.
- Courtrooms 4 and 5 – Misdemeanor calendars will continue as scheduled. PC 977 and remote appearances are strongly encouraged with in-person appearances allowed.

#### **Family Law Operations – (209) 725-4117**

- Clerk's Office hours: 8:00 am – 3:00 pm
- Courtroom 7 – Family Law calendars will continue to be heard as scheduled. Personal appearances are expected unless the party and/or their attorney properly notify the

Court of the intention to appear telephonically in writing at least one court day in advance.

- Courtroom 4 – DCSS and DV calendars will continue to be heard as scheduled. Remote appearances are strongly encouraged with in-person access limited to allow for social distancing.
- Family Court Services - Child Custody Recommending Counseling will remain remote.

#### **Juvenile Delinquency Operations – (209) 725-4119**

- Clerk’s Office hours: 8:00 am – 3:00 pm
- Courtroom 11 – Juvenile Delinquency calendars remain as scheduled at Juvenile Hall. Remote appearances only.

#### **Los Banos Courthouse Operations – (209) 725-4124**

- Walk-up window hours: 8:00 am – 3:00 pm
- Clerk’s Office and telephone hours: 8:00 am to 3:00 pm
- Courtroom 12 - Remote proceedings only, no in-person appearances. All hearings will continue as scheduled. A limited number of individuals who appear at the courthouse may be permitted to use the courthouse terminals to participate in remote hearings.
- Courtroom 13 Family Law matters (every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday) heard remotely. No in-person appearances. A limited number of individuals who appear at the courthouse may be permitted to use the courthouse terminals to participate in remote hearings.

#### **Merced Collections – (209) 725-4220**

- Clerk’s Office hours are modified: 8:00 am – 3:00 pm
- Online payments can be made on the Court’s website at [www.mercedcourt.org](http://www.mercedcourt.org)

#### **Traffic Operations – Merced: (209) 725-4107**

- Clerk’s Office hours: 7:30 am – 3:00 pm
- Telephone hours: 7:30 am – 3:00 pm
- Individuals may contact the Clerk’s Office to schedule arraignment hearings.
- Online payments can be made on the Court’s website at [www.mercedcourt.org](http://www.mercedcourt.org).

#### **Courtroom Operations Update**

##### **2260 “N” Street, Merced, CA Courthouse**

##### **Courtroom 1:**

1. Courtroom seating is limited to allow for social distancing.
2. Courtroom 1 will continue its normal felony calendars.

##### **Courtroom 2:**

1. Courtroom seating is limited to allow for social distancing.
2. Courtroom 2 will continue its normal felony calendars.

##### **Courtroom 3:**

1. Courtroom seating is limited to allow for social distancing.

2. Courtroom 3 will continue its normal criminal specialty calendars.

**Courtroom 4:**

1. Courtroom seating is limited to allow for social distancing.
2. Courtroom 4 will continue its normal calendars. Remote appearances are strongly encouraged with in-person access limited to allow for social distancing.

**Courtroom 5:**

1. Courtroom seating is limited to allow for social distancing.
2. Courtroom 5 will continue its normal calendars. Remote appearances are strongly encouraged with in-person access limited to allow for social distancing.

**Courtroom 6:**

1. Courtroom seating is limited to allow for social distancing.
2. Courtroom 6 will continue its normal felony calendars. Remote appearances are strongly encouraged with in-person access limited to allow for social distancing.

**Courtroom 7:**

1. Only parties and/or attorneys permitted in the courtroom, one case at a time.
2. Courtroom 7 will continue its normal Family Law calendars. Telephonic appearances are permitted with written notice to the Court.

**627 W. 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Merced, CA Courthouse:**

**Courtroom 8:**

1. Courtroom 8 will continue to be combined with Courtroom 10. Remote appearances are strongly encouraged with in-person access limited to allow for social distancing.

**Courtroom 9:**

1. Courtroom seating is limited to allow for social distancing.
2. Courtroom 9 will continue its normal Traffic, Small Claims and Limited Civil matters. Remote appearances are strongly encouraged with in-person access limited to allow for social distancing.

**Courtroom 10:**

1. Courtroom 10 will continue with all hearings heard remotely. No parties will be permitted in the courtroom itself.
2. Courtroom 8 calendars will continue to be heard in Courtroom 10.

**2840 West Sandy Mush Road, Merced, CA Courthouse:**

**Courtroom 11:**

1. Courtroom 11 Juvenile Delinquency calendars remain as scheduled at Juvenile Hall. Privacy requirements dictate that only individuals involved in a given case may be present when that case is proceeding. Remote appearances only.

**1159 “G” Street, Los Banos, CA Courthouse:**

**Courtroom 12:**

1. Courtroom 12 will continue with remote hearings only, although a limited number of individuals who appear at the courthouse may be permitted to use the courthouse terminals to participate in the remote hearings. Nobody will be allowed in the courtroom itself.

**Courtroom 13:**

1. Courtroom 13 will continue its Family Law matters and will allow remote hearings only, although a limited number of individuals who appear at the courthouse may be permitted to use the courthouse terminals to participate in the remote hearings. Nobody will be allowed in the courtroom itself.

**Jury Service**

- Hours of operation: 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Jury service will continue. Be assured that we are working with the County Health Department to ensure your safety. The court has installed hand sanitizing stations throughout the facilities and will be observing social distancing for juror deliberations. Additional precautionary measures include temperature scanning, temporary offsite large venues to allow for increased social distancing, batching smaller reporting groups and staggering the reporting times to allow for entry screening.

**Self Help Center – Remote Services Available**

- Center is closed for walk-in services
- Service is available via telephone Mon-Fri: 8:00 am – 12:00 pm at (209) 725-4168
- Telephone appointments are available Mon-Fri: 8:00 am – 3:00 pm
- Email assistance is available at [selfhelp@mercedcourt.org](mailto:selfhelp@mercedcourt.org) or [smallclaims.advisor@mercedcourt.org](mailto:smallclaims.advisor@mercedcourt.org)

The decision for all of the measures taken thus far was not made lightly. The Court remains committed to serving the people of Merced County and while the above measure may result in inconvenience, the Court’s overriding responsibility is to the health and safety of jurors, litigants, courthouse visitors, attorneys, justice partners and court staff. These measures are being taken to exercise the precautions necessary to maintain the safety and welfare of those who visit the courthouse during the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate the patience and understanding of the public and our justice partners during these challenging times.

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