



**AMANDA TOSTE**  
Court Executive Officer

## **Superior Court of California, County of Merced**

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 29, 2020

### **Merced Superior Court Updates Operations for Increased Access as Part of Its Plan to Mitigate the Spread of COVID-19**

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.

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. The clerk's offices will continue to be closed to the public, excluding specific filings and courtroom support. The specific filings include restraining orders, emergency petitions and emergency ex-parte requests.

#### **Effective June 1, 2020, the Court is increasing access by allowing in-person proceedings for some courtrooms, 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. 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.
3. 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.
4. Do not come to the court if you are ill and experiencing flu-like symptoms or have a fever or cough. 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

5. 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 (essential matters and courtroom support only)
- Courtroom 8 - Will be combined with Courtroom 10, with hearings held in Courtroom 10. Remote proceedings only, no in-person appearances.
- Courtroom 9 - All limited civil and small claims hearings will resume as scheduled. Remote appearances are permitted, and in-person access is limited to allow for social distancing.
- Courtroom 10 – Remote proceedings only, no in-person appearances. All hearings will resume as scheduled.
- All civil jury trials currently set between Tuesday, March 17, and Monday August 31, 2020 will be continued on a rolling basis for 8 weeks from the currently scheduled trial date.

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

- Clerk's Office hours – 8:00 am – 3:00 pm (essential matters and courtroom support only)
- Courtroom 1 – Felony calendars will resume as scheduled. Remote appearances are strongly encouraged with in-person appearances allowed.
- Courtroom 2 – Felony calendars will resume as scheduled. Remote appearances are strongly encouraged with in-person appearances allowed.
- Courtroom 3 – Criminal specialty calendars will resume as scheduled. Remote appearances are strongly encouraged with in-person appearances allowed.
- Courtroom 4 – Misdemeanor calendars will resume as scheduled. Remote appearances are strongly encouraged with in-person appearances allowed.
- Courtroom 5 – Misdemeanor calendars will resume as scheduled. Remote appearances are strongly encouraged with in-person appearances allowed.

- Courtroom 6 -- Felony calendars will resume as scheduled. 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 (Limited filings and courtroom support only) / Temporarily located in the Criminal Division
- Courtroom 7 – Family Law calendars will continue to be heard as scheduled. Remote appearances are permitted, and in-person access is limited to allow for social distancing.
- Courtroom 4 – DCSS and DV calendars will be heard as scheduled. Remote appearances are permitted, and in-person access is limited to allow for social distancing.
- Family Court Services - Child Custody Recommending Counseling will remain remote.

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

- Office will remain closed, except for essential electronic filings
- Courtroom 11 – Juvenile Delinquency calendars resume operations as scheduled at Juvenile Hall. Remote appearances are permitted, and in-person access is limited to allow for social distancing. Privacy requirements further limit access.

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

- Walk-up window hours: 8:00 am – 3:00 pm
- Courtroom 12 - Remote proceedings only, no in-person appearances. All hearings will resume 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.

**Traffic Office – Merced: (209) 725-4107 or Los Banos (209) 725-4124**

- Office will remain closed
- 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 resume its normal felony calendars and will no longer handle combined calendars.

**Courtroom 2:**

1. Courtroom seating is limited to allow for social distancing.
2. Courtroom 2 will resume its normal felony calendars and will no longer be combined with other departments.

**Courtroom 3:**

1. Courtroom seating is limited to allow for social distancing.
2. Courtroom 3 will resume its normal criminal specialty calendars and will no longer be combined with other departments.

**Courtroom 4:**

1. Courtroom seating is limited to allow for social distancing.
2. Courtroom 4 will resume its normal calendars by in-person and remote proceedings.

**Courtroom 5:**

1. Courtroom seating is limited to allow for social distancing.
2. Courtroom 5 will resume its normal calendars by in-person and remote proceedings.

**Courtroom 6:**

1. Courtroom seating is limited to allow for social distancing.
2. Courtroom 6 will resume its normal felony calendars and will no longer be combined with other departments.

**Courtroom 7:**

1. Courtroom seating is limited to allow for social distancing.
2. Courtroom 7 will continue its normal family law calendars and offers remote appearances for all matters but will permit individuals to appear in-person.

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

**Courtroom 8:**

1. Courtroom 8 will be combined with Courtroom 10, with hearings held in Department 10.

**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 and offers remote appearances for all matters but will permit individuals to appear in-person.

**Courtroom 10:**

1. Courtroom 10 will provide remote hearings only, although a limited number of individuals who appear at the courthouse may be permitted use the courthouse terminals to participate in the remote hearings. Nobody will be allowed in the courtroom itself.
2. Courtroom 8 matters will also be heard in Courtroom 10 and will provide remote hearings only, although a limited number of individuals who appear at the courthouse may use the courthouse terminals to participate in the remote hearings. Nobody will be allowed in the courtroom itself.

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

**Courtroom 11:**

1. Courtroom 11 will provide remote hearings for all matters although a limited number of individuals involved with the case may be permitted to appear in the courtroom at the discretion of the hearing officer. Privacy requirements dictate that only individuals involved in a given case may be present when that case is proceeding.

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

#### **Courtroom 12:**

1. Courtroom 12 will provide 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 resume its family law matters and will provide 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**

Jury service will resume effective June 15, 2020. 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 are currently under review. Additional information about jury service will be released soon.

### **Self Help Center – Remote Services Available**

- Center is closed for walk-in services
- Service is available via telephone Mon-Fri: 8:00 am – 3:00 pm at (209) 725-4168
- Telephone appointments are available Mon-Fri: 8:00 am – 6:00 pm
- Email assistance is available at [selfhelp@mercedcourt.org](mailto:selfhelp@mercedcourt.org) or [smallclaims.advisor@mercedcourt.org](mailto:smallclaims.advisor@mercedcourt.org)

### **Drop Box Locations**

Drop-boxes – Payments and court documents may be deposited before 4:00pm at the following locations:

- Merced courthouse, near the set of double doors on the southwest corner of 627 West 21st Street
- Merced courthouse, outside the front doors at 2260 “N” Street
- Merced Traffic, outside the front doors at 720 West 20th Street
- Los Banos, 1159 “G” Street, in the parking lot

### **Electronic Filing**

Mandatory Electronic Filing

- Local Rule of Court 2E mandates e-filing for limited, unlimited, and complex civil actions and in non-DCSS family law and probate matters. Parties that are exempt from e-filing are encouraged to utilize this service at <http://www.odysseyfileca.com/>.

The Court remains committed to serving the people of Merced County while balancing the health and safety of jurors, litigants, courthouse visitors, attorneys, justice partners and court staff. We appreciate the patience and understanding of the public and our justice partners during these challenging times.

###