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Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **PRESIDING JUDGE KEVIN C. BRAZILE ISSUES NEW GENERAL ORDER EXTENDING TRIALS AS COVID-19 INCREASES IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY**

***Some Criminal Trials May Start in September***

***Civil Jury Trials Continued until January 2021; Civil Non-Jury Trials May Not Commence Before Nov. 16 Under Terms of New Order***

***Some Unlawful Detainer Non-Jury Trials & Non-Jury Trials in Preference Cases May Begin on or After Oct. 5 in Compliance with Social Distancing Protocols***

Today, Presiding Judge Kevin C. Brazile executed a General Order to extend enumerated legal proceedings in Civil, Family, Probate, Juvenile and Criminal Divisions of the Court based on Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye's approval of the Court's request for emergency powers under Government Code section 68115. Today's Order seeks to balance the need to increase the Court's workload while keeping courthouses safe by reducing in-person appearances as COVID-19 rates of infections continue to increase in Los Angeles County.

"The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has expressed concerns to the Court about commencing jury trials and bringing jurors into County courthouses given the current COVID-19 numbers and trends," Presiding Judge Brazile said.

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**GENERAL ORDER  
2-2-2-2**

While the Court has expedited an ambitious roll-out this summer of remote courtroom appearance solutions, Judge Brazile noted that “courthouses are not designed to facilitate social distancing given their fixed configuration.” While the Court has made technology available to judicial officers to hold remote hearings, the Court – for legal and ethical reasons – cannot mandate remote appearances in every case.

“The Court cannot mandate remote appearances in criminal proceedings because emergency California Rules of Court Rules 3 and 5 for the most part authorize remote proceedings only where the defendant consents,” Presiding Judge Brazile explained. Further, Presiding Judge Brazile noted, “The Court cannot mandate remote appearances in Civil trials due to logistical and evidentiary issues.”

Since **Dependency** courts reopened on June 22, 2020, the vast majority of proceedings have been held remotely. However, social distancing mandates have strictly limited the number of cases each Dependency courtroom may hear daily. As a result, today’s Order allows judicial officers to continue Dependency cases consistent with the Dependency Prioritization Plan, which “prioritizes Dependency cases for judicial officers to hear as quickly as circumstances allow in light of COVID-19,” Presiding Judge Brazile said.

All non-jury trials, except **Small Claims** and **Traffic** trials, unless statutorily required otherwise, including in **General Civil, Criminal, Mental Health, and Probate** scheduled from August 10, 2020 to September 8, 2020, inclusive, are continued until further notice. **Civil** non-jury trials shall not be set to commence before November 16, 2020, except **Small Claims** and **Traffic** trials, which resumed today.

**Family Law** evidentiary proceedings, whether Family Code section 217 hearings or trials, other than Restraining Order hearings, that may be completed within two court days may be held. Family Law evidentiary proceedings expected to exceed two court days, shall not commence before November 16, 2020, except as authorized by the

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**GENERAL ORDER  
3-3-3-3**

Supervising Judge of Family Law.

Under the Order, and to safeguard the well-being of court users and enforce social distancing:

- Prescheduled appointments are required for in-person services from the Clerk's Office, court support services, and/or the Self-Help Centers. Appointments may be made the same day for persons seeking Restraining Orders who have completed paperwork and arrive at the courthouse no later than 3 p.m. For telephone or video assistance, or to schedule an appointment, the telephone number for each courthouse is listed at the courthouse entrance and posted on the Court's website ([www.lacourt.org](http://www.lacourt.org)).
- Access to proceedings shall be limited to the judicial officer presiding, Court personnel, parties, counsel, witnesses and those members of the public (including news reporters/media representatives) who can be accommodated in the designated courtroom while enforcing mandatory social distancing of at least six (6) feet. The determination of courtroom capacity shall be made by the Judge or Commissioner presiding in the courtroom.
- Parties and counsel are strongly urged to avoid in-person appearances and make use of technology to appear remotely whenever possible.
- Judicial officers are urged to avoid in-person hearings to the greatest extent possible and to use technology to conduct hearings and other court proceedings remotely for the duration of the state emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, when the interests of justice require, judicial officers retain the discretion to require in-person appearances.
- In accordance with the July 6 General Order, all persons are required to wear face coverings over their nose and mouth while in a courthouse. Persons whose disabilities preclude them from wearing face coverings compliant with the California Department of Public Health Guidance Concerning the Use of Face Coverings issued on June 18, 2020, are urged to seek an accommodation under

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## **GENERAL ORDER**

**4-4-4-4**

Rule 1.100 of the California Rules of Court in advance of their appearance.

- To enforce social distancing, each courtroom shall schedule only the number of matters during each session that can be conducted while enforcing mandatory social distancing requirements. Judicial officers will stagger their calendars to limit the number of persons who come to the courthouse at the same time.

The Court's *Here For You | Safe For You* initiative is designed to provide a safe courthouse environment while offering services that allow court business to be conducted remotely. Information on *Here For You | Safe For You* can be found [here](#) and on the Court's Twitter page ([@LASuperiorCourt](#)).

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