



**SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA  
COUNTY OF MADERA**

**COURT ADMINISTRATION**

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MADERA, CA 93637  
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**HON. DALE J. BLEA**  
PRESIDING JUDGE

**HON. MICHAEL JURKOVICH**  
ASST PRESIDING JUDGE

**ADRIENNE Y. CALIP**  
COURT EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**AMY DOWNEY**  
ASST COURT EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, March 16, 2020

**MEDIA CONTACT**

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**Madera County Superior Court's Plan to Mitigate the Spread of COVID-19**

Our court administration has been carefully monitoring the advice of public health officials regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 12, 2020, Governor Newsom issued an executive order mandating compliance with the recommendations of state and local public health officials. The California Department of Public Health recommends the following until at least until March 31, 2020:

- 1) nonessential gatherings of 250 or more persons be postponed or canceled;
- 2) smaller events to proceed only if a social distancing of six feet may be provided;
- 3) gatherings of persons at higher risk for severe illness are to be limited to no more than 10 people.

Our court leadership has been meeting several times each day to ensure that we are familiar with the most recent and relevant information available regarding the spread of COVID-19 and the risk it presents to our courthouse visitors, justice partners and members of court staff. On March 15, 2020, the leadership of the Madera County Superior Court met in an emergency session to discuss the most effective and responsible actions necessary to protect the public health. Our focus is on placing the court in the best position possible to comply with the "best practice" recommendations of public health officials. Our leadership committee has concluded that the following measures are now necessary:

- All civil trials, with the exception of unlawful detainer trials, currently scheduled between March 17, 2020 and April 3, 2020, are continued on a rolling basis for eight weeks from the currently scheduled trial date;

- All case management conferences and mandatory settlement conferences scheduled between March 17, 2020 and April 3, 2020, are continued on a rolling basis for eight weeks from the currently scheduled date;
- One civil department will remain open to hear all unlawful detainer matters, requests for emergency ex parte temporary restraining orders, emergency ex parte probate matters and all statutorily mandated hearings.
- All misdemeanor jury trials in which a time waiver has been entered and the defendant is out of custody, that are scheduled between March 17, 2020 and April 3, 2020, are continued on a rolling basis for eight weeks from the currently scheduled date.
- All felony jury trials in which a time waiver has been entered and the defendant is out of custody, that are scheduled between March 17, 2020 and April 3, 2020, are continued on a rolling basis for eight weeks from the currently scheduled date.
- All out-of-custody criminal arraignments that are scheduled between March 17, 2020 and April 3, 2020, are continued on a rolling basis for eight weeks from the currently scheduled date.
- All specialty court reviews, including drug court, behavioral health court and veterans' court that are scheduled between March 17, 2020 and April 3, 2020, are continued on a rolling basis for eight weeks from the currently scheduled date.
- All hearings in the appellate department that are scheduled between March 17, 2020 and April 3, 2020, are continued on a rolling basis for eight weeks from the currently scheduled date.
- All traffic trials in which a time waiver has been entered are continued on a rolling basis for eight weeks from the currently scheduled date.
- Dates for payment of fines or appearance in court on traffic citations are continued 26 weeks from the date listed on the citation or the courtesy notice, whichever is later.
- All payment plans for the payment of fines are extended 60 days before finding the payments delinquent and referring the matters to collections.
- Judicial officers assigned to family law matters have the discretion to continue all non-emergency hearings on requests for orders and status conferences between March 17, 2020 and April 3, 2020.
- There will be no day-of-court mediation service available beginning March 17, 2020.
- Family Court Services will schedule telephonic mediation services whenever practicable between March 17, 2020 and April 3, 2020.

- The self-help division is closed for walk-in appointments and all in-person self-help appointments are suspended beginning March 17, 2020. One self-help attorney and one self-help paralegal will be available for litigants who are directed to the self-help division by a judicial officer.
- Each judicial officer retains discretion to deviate from the foregoing upon a finding of good cause and keeping in mind the purpose and intent of these measures.

Criminal matters in which no time waiver has been entered or the defendant is in custody, hearings on restraining orders, requests for emergency family law or probate matters and other matters not specifically provided for above will continue to be heard as court resources and public health directives permit with the following points and recommendations:

- Attorneys and litigants are strongly encouraged to file documents by facsimile in civil, probate and family law matters.
- Attorneys and litigants are strongly encouraged to make court appearances telephonically via Court Call in all case types.
- Subject to the exercise of judicial discretion, the court will liberally grant hearing continuances upon request and will make best efforts to reduce calendar sizes to minimize health and safety risks.
- The court will summon jurors as needed to comply with state and federal law. Jury panel sizes will be reduced.
- The court will grant COVID-19 related deferrals to prospective jurors. These requests may be made by contacting the jury office at (559) 416-5570 or online at <http://jury.madera.courts.ca.gov>.
- Prospective jurors who report for service will be directed to available areas of the courthouse to maintain appropriate social distancing consistent with state public health recommendations.
- In-custody arraignments will continue as scheduled by remote video conference.
- Trials currently underway will continue as scheduled, however, jurors may be asked to take health appropriate measures such as sitting outside the jury box to encourage appropriate social distancing.
- The court requests that persons appearing in the jury assembly rooms and courtrooms maintain at least one empty seat between themselves and other persons.
- The court requests that all persons appearing in the courthouse allow appropriate space between themselves and others when waiting in lines and that they not crowd elevators or other confined areas.

- Court users and visitors will be asked to wait in hallways or outside courtrooms to help maintain appropriate social distancing.
- Attorneys and litigants are reminded that it is your responsibility to keep your contact information, including addresses and telephone numbers, current with the court. This is our only way of contacting you to keep you informed of developments in this fluid and rapidly changing environment.
- Those who are ill, including jurors, potential jurors, attorneys, litigants, justice partners and court staff should remain at home. If you have a matter on calendar, you should contact the court and advise that you will not be appearing due to illness.

It is the stated mission of the Madera County Superior Court to ensure equal and fair access for all to our judicial system. We will endeavor to meet this mission as we confront COVID-19 during this unprecedented and challenging time in our court's history. While the above measures may result in inconvenience, our overriding responsibility is to the health and safety of jurors, litigants, courthouse visitors, attorneys, justice partners and court staff. These measures are designed to comply with the recommendations of public health officials with regard to "best practices" for gatherings and social distancing. We will continue to work closely with public health officials and justice partners as this pandemic develops. Our court administration appreciates your patience and understanding during these most challenging times.