



Superior Court of California County of Orange ***News Release***

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Presiding Judge Erick Larsh Urges Bar and Litigants to Use Remote Appearance Opportunities as COVID-19 Incidents Increase

Santa Ana, CA – Orange County Superior Court has implemented procedures regarding remote appearances, which will enable the Court to remain open in light of the recent COVID-19 surge of the Omicron variant.

Presiding Judge Erick L. Larsh urged attorneys and litigants to use the Court's remote appearance options, in an effort to reduce the number of people in courthouses and therefore protect the health and safety of our community.

"I strongly encourage attorneys and members of the public to use all opportunities available to appear remotely, as the winter COVID surge, fueled by dual variants, requires that we do our part to protect the health of our community," said Presiding Judge Larsh. "We need to take advantage of the statutory changes that allow remote appearances. These rules and procedures allow parties the right to appear remotely in non-evidentiary hearings."

Toward the end of the 2021 legislative session the California Legislature enacted California Code of Civil Procedure, section 367.75 which became effective Jan. 1, 2022. Thus, non-evidentiary hearings will be set for remote appearance. Evidentiary hearings and trials, however, will be set for in-person appearance, unless the Court orders otherwise.

"Please keep in mind that Orange County Superior Court has a policy in place mandating the use of face masks over the nose and mouth in all courthouses regardless of vaccination status," Presiding Judge Larsh added.

This action was necessitated by the California Department of Public Health and the Orange County Health Care Agency recommendations. The Court's focus remains the safety and health of our judicial officers, employees, justice partners, and our community.

"The Court will continue to monitor developments, as it proceeds cautiously to provide ever greater access to justice," Presiding Judge Larsh said. "We will continue to

coordinate with our justice partners, aiming to provide the greatest possible access to justice, without compromising the health and safety of our community.”

Finally, the Court will be scaling back the number of jurors reporting at any one time, at least through the month of January. To the extent possible, seating capacity in courtrooms may also be limited to allow jurors to sit sufficiently spaced during jury duty.

Presiding Judge Larsh also stressed:

- That everyone entering Orange County Superior Court facilities – regardless of vaccination status – is required to wear a face covering over their nose and mouth. Persons whose disabilities preclude them from wearing face coverings should request an accommodation under Rule 1.100 of the California Rules of Court in advance of their court appearance or appointment.
- That everyone seeking services from our Court to first use all available online resources. Such resources as Self-Help Services and Clerk’s Office support services can be accessed via our website: <https://www.occourts.org/index.html>
- If a person is experiencing COVID-19 related symptoms they should not enter Court facilities. Should you have such symptoms promptly call the relevant courtroom, where your case is heard.
- That attorneys and litigants should not meet and confer unnecessarily in hallways, and people who must come to courthouses should not bring unnecessary companions.

For more information and to follow future developments please visit the Court’s website at <https://www.occourts.org/index.html> and the Court’s dedicated COVID-19 webpages at <https://www.occourts.org/media-relations/CoronaVirusUpdate.html>

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