

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**SONOMA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT MAKES OPERATIONS ADJUSTMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE COUNTY'S ADOPTION OF THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH STAY HOME ORDER**

**Santa Rosa, CA – December 14, 2020**

The Superior Court of Sonoma County announced today that, effective immediately, it will implement new operations changes in response to the County's adoption of the Stay Home Order. The Court's highest priority continues to be the health and safety of our staff, our bench, justice partners, and the public.

With a little patience and effort, we as a community can minimize risk and exposure to COVID-19 says, Presiding Judge Brad DeMeo. The Court asks everyone who has a scheduled hearing to take measures to protect themselves and court personnel from the unnecessary risk of spread or contracting COVID-19. Members of the public should **not** visit a courthouse unless they have a scheduled in-person hearing or an appointment to enter the building for other services between now and January 31, 2021. There are several ways you can still have your matter heard when you are not physically in the courthouse.

If you have a court appearance scheduled between now and January 31, 2021, in a criminal courtroom, we ask that you use one of the following options to avoid coming to the courthouse:

1. The Zoom connection information provided in your court notice can be used to make a video appearance. Zoom can be used on electronic devices such as a smart phone, laptop or tablet, iPad, or computer. The Court's website lists the Zoom connection for each courtroom and specific calendars such as the domestic violence court calendar.
2. In misdemeanor matters your attorney can appear on your behalf pursuant to Penal Code section 977. With your written consent your attorney can appear on your behalf in any matter and can even submit a written waiver of rights and enter a plea on your behalf.
3. The Sonoma County Public Library has a Zoom kiosk available starting December 14, 2020, for use by persons over the age of 65 years who have filed an application for a restraining order. If you are over 65 years old, you may contact our Self-Help Center at (707) 521-6534, to learn more and set an appointment to use the kiosk for your hearing.
4. If your matter is simply to show proof of compliance with a court order or probation terms, such as a record of attendance in a program or self-help meetings, please submit the proof through your lawyer who can file it at the clerk's office. Lawyers will be permitted to submit proof of completion or attendance on behalf of their clients at the Criminal Clerk's Office in lieu of appearance in court.

Effective immediately, Clerk's Office are opened 8:00 am -10:00 am Monday – Friday. Emergency ex partes, domestic violence, all temporary restraining order petitions and civil ex partes can be filed in the Civil or Family Clerk's Offices during these hours. Drop boxes will be open 24/7.

For additional updates during the modified operations, please visit the Sonoma County Superior Court website at <http://sonoma.courts.ca.gov/> and on our social media platforms Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Court users are advised to check this page regularly as plans could change.