

**SUPERIOR COURT OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY
CIVIL INDEPENDENT CALENDAR DEPARTMENT NW-T
JUDGE SHIRLEY K. WATKINS
COURTROOM INFORMATION
WWW.LACOURT.CA.GOV
(effective June 2024)**

**COURT WEBSITE: www.lacourt.ca.gov
LOCAL RULES: www.lacourt.org/courtrules**

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Court Address: 6230 Sylmar Avenue, Van Nuys, CA 91401 (Van Nuys East Building)

Courtroom Telephone Number: (818) 901-4612

Courtroom Hours: The courtroom is open 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. On trial days, court usually adjourns at 4:15 p.m.

ADA REQUESTS: Please complete the online form requesting ADA Accommodations at www.lacourt.ca.gov.

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION:

SETTLEMENT PROGRAMS

The Superior Court of Los Angeles County has a variety of settlement programs. Litigants should closely review the requirements for each program and the types of cases served.

CIVIL MEDIATION VENDOR RESOURCE LIST

Litigants may use the Civil Mediation Vendor Resource List to arrange voluntary mediations without Court referral or involvement. The Resource List includes organizations that have been selected through a formal process that have agreed to provide a limited number of low-cost or no-cost mediation sessions with attorney mediators or retired judges. Organizations may accept or decline cases at their discretion. Mediations are scheduled directly with these organizations and are most often conducted through videoconferencing. The organizations on the Resource List target active civil cases valued between \$50,000-\$250,000, though cases outside this range may be considered. For more information and to view the list of vendors, download the Resource List Flyer and FAQ Sheet at www.lacourt.org/ADR/programs.html.

MEDIATION VOLUNTEER PANEL (MVP)

Cases referred to the Court's Mediation Volunteer Panel (MVP) are eligible for three hours of virtual mediation at no cost with a qualified mediator from the MVP. Through this program,

mediators volunteer preparation time and three hours of mediation at no charge. If the parties agree to continue the mediation after three hours, the mediator may charge their market hourly rate. When a case is referred to the MVP, the Court's ADR Office will provide information and instructions to the parties. The Notice directs parties to meet and confer to select a mediator from the MVP or they may request that the ADR Office assign them a mediator. The assigned MVP mediator will coordinate the mediation with the parties. For more information or to view MVP mediator profiles, visit the Court's ADR webpage at www.lacourt.org/ADR or email ADRCivil@lacourt.ca.gov.

MEDIATION CENTER OF LOS ANGELES (MCLA) REFERRAL PROGRAM

The Court may refer cases to low-cost mediation through a formal contract with the Mediation Center of Los Angeles (MCLA), a nonprofit organization that manages a panel of highly qualified mediators. The Court's ADR Office will provide the parties with information for submitting the case intake form for this program. MCLA will assign a mediator based on the type of case presented and the availability of the mediator to complete the mediation in an appropriate time frame. MCLA has a designated fee schedule for this program. For more information, contact the Court's ADR Office at ADRCivil@lacourt.ca.gov.

RESOLVE LAW LA (RLLA) VIRTUAL MANDATORY SETTLEMENT CONFERENCES

Resolve Law LA provides three-hour virtual Mandatory Settlement Conferences at no cost for personal injury and non-complex employment cases. Cases must be ordered into the program by a judge pursuant to applicable Standing Orders issued by the Court and must complete the program's online registration process. The program leverages the talent of attorney mediators with at least 10 years of litigation experience who volunteer as settlement officers. Each MSC includes two settlement officers, one each from the plaintiff and defense bars. For more information, visit <https://resolvelawla.com>.

CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCES: CMC Statements are required no later than 15 calendar days prior to the CMC per CRC 3.725. Meet and confer per CRC 3.724 and 3.727 is required prior to each CMC.

COMPLAINTS AND ANSWERS AS ATTACHMENTS: All complaints and answers (or petitions and responses) must be separately filed (e-filed if by counsel). Complaints (or amended complaints) and answers (or amended answers) *cannot be "deemed" filed* as an attachment to another document.

CONTINUANCES: Trial continuances must be heard on a noticed motion OR Ex Parte Application OR by Stipulation and Order *with a mandatory declaration showing Good Cause*. A stipulation alone without a good faith reason stated by declaration is insufficient. A filing fee is required. Please do not wait until the last minute to seek any continuances.

COVID: The court requires all persons to follow the court's policies and procedures, which may be found at www.lacourt.ca.gov. The court will be flexible within reasonable limits to scheduling accommodations during this period.

COURT REPORTERS: The court does not provide court reporters unless there is a fee waiver and request for a reporter. Even so, there is still no guarantee that the court will have a reporter available under those circumstances. Any party otherwise seeking the presence of a court reporter must secure the service of a private court reporter with a proposed order designating the court reporter as the official reporter. The court must be in receipt of the order prior to the hearing.

COURTESY AND CIVILITY BY COUNSEL: At all times counsel's conduct before the court, in writing, in communications and with regard to each other and self-represented litigants shall be professional, polite, courteous, and respectful. Counsel are required to comply with local rules and State Bar rules on civility and professionalism.

COURTCONNECT: If you are not admitted to the call within 10 minutes, please call the department at (818) 901-4612.

COURTESY COPIES: Department T will accept courtesy copies.

DIFFICULTIES WITH SIGNING IN FOR REMOTE APPEARANCES: If you have difficulty signing in, please completely disconnect and try again. If you are on hold for more than 10 minutes and cannot hear anything, please call the department at (818) 901-4612.

EMAILS: From time to time counsel/parties may receive emails from the courtroom. However, you may not email the department without prior court approval. The courtroom email is not regularly monitored.

EX PARTE APPLICATIONS: Ex Parte Applications and Requests for Temporary Restraining Orders/Preliminary Injunctions are heard MONDAY through FRIDAY at 8:30 a.m. For an Ex Parte Application to Shorten Time on a Motion, the motion date should be reserved on CRS before the ex parte hearing. "CRC Rule 3.1203. Time of notice to other parties (a) Time of notice - A party seeking an ex parte order must notify all parties no later than 10:00 a.m. the court day before the ex parte appearance, absent a showing of exceptional circumstances that justify a shorter time for notice. (b) Time of notice in unlawful detainer proceedings - A party seeking an ex parte order in an unlawful detainer proceeding may provide shorter notice than required under (a) provided that the notice given is reasonable.

EXPIRATION OF 5 YEAR TIME TO BRING CASE TO TRIAL: Parties are required at all times to be aware of the expiration of the 5 year time limitation to bring their case to trial.

DISPOSITIVE MOTIONS: *Plan ahead.* It takes up to 4 months to reserve a date for MSJ/MSAI.

HEARINGS: All hearings, including Trial, FSC, law and motion, ex partes are heard at 8:30 a.m.

INFORMAL DISCOVERY CONFERENCES: You may discuss discovery disputes with the court at any case management conference or any hearing in which all parties are in attendance. Also, you may file a request for an Informal Discovery Conference on the court's website, www.lacourt.ca.gov. Informal Discovery Conferences may not be reported or cited. The court generally does not issue orders at Informal Discovery Conferences other than extending the time to file a motion to compel per statute. Any stipulations at an Informal Discovery Conference shall be in writing.

INTERPRETERS: The court will provide interpreters. Please submit Judicial Council Form I NT-300 as soon as it becomes known for the need of an interpreter or request on line at www.lacourt.ca.gov. A form is not needed to request a Spanish language interpreter for any hearing. Every effort to obtain non-Spanish language interpreters will be made but there is no guarantee that an interpreter for your specified language will be available for your hearing and the hearing may need to be continued to another date.

JURY FEES: Jury fees must be posted, or a jury fee waiver order obtained, no later than 30 days before trial.

LODGING DEPOSITIONS: Depositions shall be lodged before trial with a Notice of Lodging Depositions.

MANDATORY SETTLEMENT CONFERENCES: The court has a limited number of MSC slots available each month. Discuss the possible scheduling of a Mandatory Settlement Conference at the CMC hearing.

MINI-OPENING STATEMENTS: The court will allow mini-opening statements at trial.

MORNING CALENDAR/ COURT HEARINGS: The court starts daily proceedings *on time at 8:30 a.m.*

MOTIONS: All motion hearing dates (except not for Motions in Limine) must be reserved in advance using the Court Reservation System (CRS) except with leave of Court. Follow the link-Online Services-Court Reservation System (CRS) on the Court's website. Motions are heard Monday through Friday at 8:30 a.m. The court does post tentative rulings. To view tentative rulings please visit the court's website, www.lacourt.ca.gov.

MOTIONS TO WITHDRAW AS COUNSEL: Please be sure to include on the proposed order an address, telephone number and email address of the client(s). Orders are effective only upon filing the proof of service of the conformed order on all parties and the clients.

NOTICE OF RELATED CASES: The Court requires timely compliance with California Rules of Court 3-300 regarding Notice of Related Cases.

OPENING STATEMENTS- Use of exhibits: Pursuant to Local Rule 3.97, in opening statements to the jury by counsel, no display to the jury or reference should be made to any chart, graph, map, picture, model, video, or any other graphic device or presentation except (1) when marked as an exhibit and received in evidence, (2) by stipulation of counsel, or (3) with leave of court. With prior approval of the court, counsel may use the chalkboard or paper for illustrative purposes during opening statements.

PROCEDURES FOR MAKING AND ARGUING OBJECTIONS AT TRIAL: All objections, statements and argument shall be made to the court rather than to opposing counsel. Speaking objections in front of the jury are prohibited. Only the legal basis for an objection shall be stated by counsel. Further argument may be allowed by the court outside the presence of the jury and only upon the appropriate and timely request by counsel.

PROPOSED ORDERS: Please submit proposed orders for all motions and ex parte applications.

REMOTE APPEARANCES: Telephonic/Court Connect/video appearances are allowed for all appearances in Department T *except* OSCs re Contempt, Evidentiary Hearings and Trials unless pursuant to court order after a request pursuant to C.C.P. 367.75 and RA-010 or by stipulation and order. Please review C.C.P. § 367.75 concerning Remote Appearances. Also, please review Judicial Council Form, RA-010 for mandatory use for Evidentiary and Trial Remote Appearances. California Rules of Court 3.670 also refers to procedures for Remote Appearances. If you are not admitted to the call within 10 minutes, please call the department at (818) 901-4612.

SELF REPRESENTED LITIGANTS: Information for self-represented litigants may be found on the Superior Court of Los Angeles County website www.lacourt.ca.gov, at the Judicial Branch of California's website <https://www.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp.htm> or the LA County Law Library website <https://www.lalawlibrary.org/selfhelp/fag>.

SETTLEMENTS: All dates remain on calendar unless the plaintiff (and cross-complainant if applicable) files a Notice of Settlement, at which time dates will be vacated and an OSC re dismissal per California Rules of Court 3.1385 will be set approximately 45 days later.

STIPULATIONS DURING TRIAL: "Local Rule 3.125 - OFFERS TO STIPULATE TO BE OUT OF JURY'S HEARING Offers to stipulate must be made outside the hearing of jurors. While the court is in

session, counsel wishing to stipulate must first obtain leave of court and then confer with other counsel outside the hearing of the jurors."

TENTATIVE RULINGS: The Court may issue tentative rulings before law and motion hearings. To view tentative rulings please visit the court's website, www.lacourt.ca.gov.

TRIAL AND FINAL STATUS CONFERENCE: Trials are typically set MONDAY - THURSDAY at 8:30 a.m. Final Status Conferences are typically set 7-10 days before the trial at 8:30 a.m. The courtroom is dark for trials on Fridays.

FINAL STATUS CONFERENCE ORDERS:

Final Status Conference Orders: At the time of the FSC, the following shall have been already filed and/or delivered to Dept. T as noted below:

1. Filed-Joint Witness List
2. Filed-Joint Exhibit List, include columns for DATE ID'd and DATE ADMITTED.
3. Filed-Joint Statement of the Case.
4. Filed-Proposed Verdict Form
5. *Filed-List of jury instructions*
6. *Delivered-Jury instructions*, fully edited, printed out and delivered to Dept. T.
7. *Delivered-5 Sets of Exhibit Books*, tabbed and indexed, and delivered to Dept. T. (One set for the clerk, one set for the judge, one set for the witness box and each side to have a copy.)
8. Filed-Proposed Juror Questionnaire, if requested. Questionnaires will not include questions concerning the location of the prospective jurors' residences in accordance with changes to the Standards for Judicial Administration.
9. Filed-Motions in Limine are set to be heard on the date of the FSC on regular, statutory notice like regular law and motion (16 court days for motion, 9 court days for opposition, 5 court days for reply). You do not need to reserve a date as the FSC will be the hearing date. All parties and witnesses must be advised of the court rulings on motions in limine and that they must comply with the court orders.

10. Lodge-Depositions must be lodged with the Clerk of the Court prior to the start of trial.
11. *Discuss*-A final time estimate for the trial will be discussed at the FSC.
12. *Discuss*-A decision shall be made as to who will be paying for the jury each day and discuss this at the FSC.
13. *Discuss-If* applicable, counsel are to meet and confer on the number of "sides" for purposes of calculating peremptory challenges during jury selection to discuss at the FSC.
14. If there is a lack of cooperation in preparing joint documents, then please file individual documents with a declaration explaining the difficulty.
15. Failure to timely comply will result in monetary sanctions in the sum of \$250 against counsel of record for violation of court orders, CCP section 177.5.