



SUPERIOR COURT
of
SANTA BARBARA
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PUBLIC NOTICE

**Continued Court Closure – Santa Barbara Juvenile Court
PURSUANT TO GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 68106
INVITATION TO COMMENT BY DECEMBER 27, 2024**

CtAdmin@sbcourts.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: October 28, 2024

The Superior Court of California, County of Santa Barbara, intends to continue the closure of the juvenile courtroom of the Superior Court located at Dept. 14, 1108 Santa Barbara St., Santa Barbara, CA 93101. The Court initially closed this location and consolidated all juvenile matters into the Santa Maria Juvenile Court Facility adjacent to the Santa Barbara County Juvenile Hall in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consolidating all juvenile matters at that location was safer, more efficient for all juvenile justice partners and increased the educational hours available for juveniles. Minors detained by the Santa Barbara County Probation Department are housed in the Juvenile Hall in Santa Maria. That same facility provides education for detained minors. Prior to the pandemic, detained minors attending court were transported by secure van to the South County Courthouse. Transportation time to and from South County along with the time spent in court, reduced the time available for the minor's regular course work. The Court has successfully conducted all juvenile proceedings in the Santa Maria location for over 4.5 years.

The pandemic revolutionized the way courts conducted proceedings. The proliferation of remote proceedings conducted via Zoom required the court and justice partners to introduce state of the art video conferencing equipment. This innovation allowed working parents, or those otherwise unable to attend proceedings, the opportunity to attend via video conferencing. In order to accommodate parents unable to attend minor's court proceedings in the other end of the county, Santa Barbara County Probation offered to host parents at their facilities, in a confidential setting, using probation video conferencing equipment. This new and innovative method of conducting business increased access to justice.

During this same time the court struggled to recruit and retain qualified juvenile court staff. Several seasoned court personnel left the workforce. A generational change in the Santa Barbara employment market has resulted in high turnover of new recruits joining the Superior Court of California, County of Santa Barbara. This tough labor market is exacerbated by 7.95% reductions in the California State Budget. Those cuts saw a \$1.2 million reduction in the Santa Barbara Superior Court budget, further hampering the court's ability to compete with local government not enduring funding reductions.

In addition to the efficiencies gained by consolidating all juvenile cases in the one location, the court lacks the ability to staff two separate operations and will not be able to remedy those staffing concerns in the foreseeable future. Aggravating an already difficult situation is the national shortage of court reporters. The Court has a 25% vacancy rate among its certified court reporters and is unable to staff many daily court calendars. By conducting court proceedings in a single location, the court is ensured that a verbatim record can be obtained in these critical juvenile proceedings. All of these circumstances have culminated in the need for the Court to take this action.

Government Code Section 68106 requires to the court to provide the public 60 days to submit written comments on a such a proposed plan to change/close an operation. While this consolidation of juvenile proceedings has been in place since March of 2020, the decision was driven by the exigency of the COVID-19 pandemic. There was no opportunity for public comment at that time. Since then the court met with stakeholders in the juvenile justice community to hear concerns firsthand. However, having proven the efficacy of the consolidated juvenile operations and experiencing the challenges associated with labor shortages and budget cuts, the Court intends to maintain consolidated juvenile operations with an official effective date of January 8, 2025.

If you would like to submit comments about the proposed reductions, please send them to: Darrel E. Parker, Court Executive Officer, 1100 Anacapa Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101. Additionally, you may submit comments via e-mail at CtAdmin@sbcourts.org

This notice has been posted on the Court's website at www.sbcourts.org and displayed on digital signage throughout each court location.

Pursuant to Government Code section 68106, this proposal has been published for public comment with a deadline of December 27, 2024.