

ONLINE PROCEDURE MANUAL

Superior Court of Amador County

Step-by-Step Guides Increase Staff Versatility

In small courts such as the Superior Court of Amador County, where personnel total about three dozen, staff may be called on to do anything from processing an appeal to buying gas for the court's van. Versatility is everyone's job requirement. Now, thanks to the Online Procedure Manual, versatility has become easier to accomplish.

If a staff member from the criminal division is working the counter, and a litigant approaches with a civil filing, the staff member has instant access to the procedure for processing the filing, without consulting the civil division staff or hunting for hard-copy instructions.

The manual currently consists of close to 100 step-by-step "job aids" that walk a user through each task. The aids provide warnings about critical deadlines and other urgent information as well as links to Judi-

cial Council forms and rules and to related job aids. The job aid on closing a criminal case, for example, includes links to job aids on reporting to the Department of Justice or the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Using the online manual, the staff have become more confident and consistent in responding to attorneys and the public.

"I was in a position today in which I had to process a juvenile dependency warrant," said clerk Jennifer Novelli. "The clerks with the knowledge of this were out of the office. Thank goodness I had the job aid to get me through the procedure swiftly and efficiently for our county counsel's office. It was very clear and precise."

About 30 members of the court's clerical and administrative staffs now use the manual, which went online in June 2008 and is updated continually. Preparation of job aids for the fiscal and business staffs is under way. Judicial job aids also are in the court's future.

To compose a job aid, the court first designates a staff member as a subject-matter expert. (But "everybody has input," says court manager Janet Davis.) The designated expert writes the job aid and then, to find out whether the task can be completed successfully using only the aid as a guide, the expert sends a draft to a staff member who has no working knowledge of the procedure. After the necessary revisions are made, the job aid is sent to the court manager for approval and then to the staff Web developer for integration into the Online Procedure Manual on the court's internal Web site. A project manager oversees the process, eliminating duplicate job aids and identifying the need for and assigning the preparation of new ones.



The Online Procedure Manual offers court staff descriptions of a wide range of common tasks.

Staff, who are encouraged to e-mail feedback to court managers, report less stress in finding information, more confidence that their tasks will be performed competently during their absences, and more satisfaction in serving the public.



Clerk Cassandra Dehoff said, “I used the job aid to prepare and lodge trial exhibits in the locker. Everything I needed to know was in the instructions.”

“I thought I remembered how to exonerate a bail bond,” wrote clerk Nikki Castoe, “but I used the job aid anyway and realized that I would have missed steps if I would have tried to do it without the job aid. The job aids are wonderful for refresher purposes, too, not just brand-new learning.”

“I have not had to do this for a long time,” wrote clerk Mary Ellen Morris, after using the job aid on creating delayed e-mail. “And it was great having a way to walk me through the process again to make sure I did it correctly.”



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Job Aid: How to Prepare Minute Order After Tentative Ruling

Introduction In Civil Cases the Court issues Tentative Rulings on Law and Motion matters. If oral arguments are not requested, the Court adopts the Tentative Ruling and no hearing is held.

Responsibility The Courtroom Clerk assigned to prepare the Tentative Ruling Minute Orders. (Currently Nikki Castoe).

Procedure Follow the steps below to prepare a Minute Order after Tentative Ruling.

Step	Action
1	The Research Attorney shall e-mail the tentative rulings to the appropriate clerks. Tentative Rulings are also available at: N:\Users\Tentative Rulings\2008\Click on appropriate date
2	If red light is blinking, press the MSG message button.
3	• Prepare Minute Order with language: The Court's tentative ruling is adopted as it's Order: • Cut and paste the tentative ruling from either the Research Attorney's e-mail or from the N: drive. TBA-Job Aid How to Prepare Minute Order
4	Tip Press 5 to Listen to the Message
5	Docket your Minute Order in CourtView.
6	Result the Event with code TENT=Tentative Ruling.
	TENT TENTATIVE RULING
7	Track the file to the active shelf. Refer to: Job Aid How to Track Case in CourtView

Important It is important to turn around the files as quickly as possible because the matters often have another court date fast approaching.

Label
Approved by Janet Davis, Court Manager: _____ Date: _____

Revised: 5/19/08

Each job aid guides the user through a series of steps to complete the task.

Court managers plan to track the way job aids are used and to refine them as necessary. The entire manual also will be reviewed regularly to ensure that the job aids continue to reflect the most accurate and efficient ways to perform tasks. All staff will be retrained periodically to assure the best use of the manual.

TO REPLICATE THIS PROGRAM:

- Contact Ms. Davis to obtain a copy of the Amador County court's job aid on writing a job aid.
- Alter it to suit your court.
- Once everyone is comfortable with it, select subject-matter experts to write the aids applicable to their duties.
- Choose a project manager.
- Coordinate with technical staff to develop a central database.
- Monitor continually for legal changes, form changes, and glitches.

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