

MERCED

Population: 264,922 • Authorized Judges: 12 • Staff: 147 FTE

Civil Filings: 3,631 • Criminal Filings: 41,315 • Family/Juvenile Filings: 4,227 • Other Filings: 417

OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

Ensure court clerks are available when and how people need them.

- **All Clerk's office hours are open 8:00 AM- 3:00 PM daily which allows staff to complete their daily tasks and any backlogs.**
- **Many court users must use drop-boxes to file their papers; often papers are returned if they are incorrect or incomplete.**

Help more self-represented litigants in family and housing cases with at the Self Help/Facilitator's office.

- **Our Los Banos Courthouse Self Help office is closed, leaving that portion of the county w/o self help assistance. This requires residents to travel 45 miles to our main location. The Merced location assists the public until 4:00 PM.**
- **People who line up before 8:00 AM may not see an attorney until after 3:00 PM. Those individuals not seen by the attorney must return the next day for assistance.**
- **All appointments are scheduled daily on a first come-first served basis.**

Protect families with emergency orders and restore family stability with mediated custody agreements.

- **3-month delay for mediation.**
- **3 additional mediators are needed to bring the caseload current.**
- **A typical family law case can remain in the court for 2 to 3 years.**

Reduce wait time for sealing/expunging criminal records to help people get jobs and to protect privacy.

- **Significant backlogs in the various divisions exist due to our transitioning to electronic filing. (Requires extensive processing time to prep/convert older cases into our CMS).**
- **Reduce wait time for businesses and individuals to get money owed in civil disputes.**
- **There are significant backlogs for all civil case types with no end in sight.**
- **Mandatory e-filing, which is convenient for filers, takes longer for clerks to process than filings at the counters.**
- **Mail processing is backlogged by weeks which includes filings.**

PRIORITIES FOR REINVESTMENT

Assuming an additional investment in operations funds, we intend to...

- Hire 6 clerks to assist at public counters, phone service and e-filing. This would help assist the public in an expeditious manner and reduce our current wait times.
- Add a part-time Family Law Facilitator/Self Help Attorney in the Self-Help Office to serve members in the Los Banos branch Court. Also add FTE Paralegal positions in the Merced Self Help Office to assist the public with information/forms.
- Add an additional FTE Child Custody Recommending Counselor/Mediator and part time Probate Examiner.
- Address inflationary cost increases and make needed adjustments to recruit qualified candidates and retain experienced staff.
- Continue to upgrade and expand existing IT infrastructure to align with new technology.

Email: Linda.romero-soles@mercedcourt.org Phone: [209.725.4100](tel:209.725.4100) Online: www.mercedcourt.org