

SANTA CLARA

Population: 1,868,558 • Authorized Judges: 77 • Staff: 561 FTE
Civil Filings: 20,293 • Criminal Filings: 179,705 • Family/Juvenile Filings: 13,279 • Other Filings: 3,113

OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

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

- **Initial custody mediations are delayed, so families wait longer for post-separation stability for children.**
- **When parties agree or a judge decides the terms of judgment but then staff shortages delay processing the judgment, families continue in conflict and may even return to court for more hearings.**

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

- **The civil division clerk's office closes at 3:00 pm generally and at noon on Fridays, limiting access.**
- **Fewer operating windows in the clerk's office have resulted in long lines, which often force customers to return later and/or miss work to conduct court business.**
- **Phone services have been nearly eliminated.**

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

- **We are backlogged in sealing juvenile records, so youth entitled to privacy under statutory mandate may not actually be protected.**

Help more people who don't have lawyers in family and housing cases at the Self Help/Facilitator's office.

- **Our Self-Help Center is open only 3 days per week.**
- **Court users must wait two weeks for a response to a telephone, email, or mail inquiry.**
- **Interpreters are not always available to assist court users, which delays court proceedings.**

Reduce wait-time for businesses and individuals to get money owed in civil disputes

- **Even undisputed money claims are backlogged 10 months, so 600 creditors may not ever recover debts they are admittedly owed.**
- **1,500 plaintiffs who already have judgments face more months of clerical delays when they try to enforce the judgment.**

Restore local court services and reopen courtrooms.

- **Consolidation of traffic, unlawful detainer, and small claims cases from North and South County courthouses has forced individuals to take long bus rides and miss work for court business.**

Technology

- **The benefits to the public of an electronic case management system have been delayed due to staffing shortages caused by underfunding.**

PRIORITIES FOR REINVESTMENT

Assuming an additional investment in operations funds, we intend to

- Clear all backlogs to ensure timely justice in all case types.
- Hire staff to eliminate delays that harm the public.
- Complete implementation of an electronic case management system to allow efficient operations and reduce wait times.
- Restore counter hours to 4:00 pm, Monday – Friday to reestablish full public access.
- Hire staff in the Self-Help Center to assist people who can't afford lawyers, and reestablish full public access to the Self-Help Center 5 days per week.