

# SONOMA

Population: 490,486 • Authorized Judges: 21 • Staff: 169 FTE

Civil Filings: 6,204 • Criminal Filings: 52,628 • Family/Juvenile Filings: 4,505 • Other Filings: 1,484

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## OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

Public services have been progressively and significantly reduced over the last five years:

- **Clerk Offices close at 3:30 pm – difficult for litigants trying to conduct court business.**
- **Public phones answered from 8-12pm with wait times 45+ minutes; long juror lines.**
- **Court’s website has not been maintained, information is stale, not customer oriented, difficult to navigate, not user friendly; does not provide value to court users.**
- **The Court is often unable to recruit professional staff with the necessary skills, training, experience and or education to meet the minimal qualification for many of the Court’s key professional jobs.**

Insufficient Staffing Court-wide; court’s work including filings, minute entry, case processing, scanning, mandated reporting and case investigations is significantly backlogged.

- **Mediation appointments being scheduled six weeks out and growing.**
- **Significant backlog of petitions for sealing/expunging criminal records.**
- **Approximately 300 Juvenile ex-parte cases are waiting to be sealed.**
- **60 juvenile ex-parte not processed; Family law judgments are 8-12 weeks out, with over 160 judgments awaiting staff processing; Orders (approx. 8-10 weeks out).**
- **Self-Help Center operates 16.5 hours per week; does not provide assistance for pro se litigants filing UD’s, Small Claims, TROs, Guardianships & general procedural questions.**
- **Significant probate filing backlogs of approximately 3-4 weeks, orders 4-5 weeks; significant civil filing, judgments, orders & criminal minute entry 7 -10 months.**
- **Court does not comply with numerous statutory requirements, including mandatory reporting to DOJ and DMV.**

## PRIORITIES FOR REINVESTMENT

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

- Hire additional clerks, which will allow us to keep clerk’s offices open until 4 p.m., eliminate backlogs, and cross-train so as to return to universal filing.
- Enhance security of courthouses, particularly the Hayward Hall of Justice.
- Add additional staff to the Self-Help Center to expand services to more court users.
- Restore public service hours where operating hours are aligned with litigants’ availability to conduct court business, court would hire 10 – 15 FTEs court-wide to allow coverage to assist customers during business hours, adequately staff courtrooms and eliminate backlogs.
- Conduct a Comp/Class Study, adjust salaries for certain classifications to a fair market value so the court can attract and retain professionals with the required experience and education to sufficiently service the bench and provide professional services to the public.
- Hire 2 attorneys, 1 court investigators, 1 probate examiner, 2 court reporters, and 1 website developer.
- Replace outdated phone system to provide functionality that allows the court to provide greater automated information to the public; purchase jury software/kiosk for automated juror check in.