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Santa Clara County Superior Court Applauds the Chief Justice's Efforts to Fast Track Criminal Matters

Criminal and Traffic Matters Are Seeing Benefits from Santa Clara County's Innovative Practices

In December, California Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye [announced a program](#) to make retired judges available through the Temporary Assigned Judges Program to assist in the resolution of criminal cases. The Santa Clara County Superior Court applauds these efforts, having found success implementing similar programs during the pandemic.

Upon the resumption of criminal trials in May of 2020, the Santa Clara County Superior Court, in cooperation with our justice partners, mandated readiness conferences for all time not waived misdemeanor trials. Readiness conferences occur a week in advance of the trial date, and the Court is frequently able to resolve more than half of the cases set for trial the following week. As a result, the Court does not have a significant backlog of misdemeanor cases.

The Court is exploring the expansion of readiness calendars to time waived cases, utilizing the judges made available under the Temporary Assigned Judges Program. The deficit in court funding and attendant staffing issues as well as Covid-19 related issues such as the need to maintain social distancing and reduce the number of people entering the courthouses, present obstacles to completely eliminating the backlog in criminal proceedings, and limits the Court's ability to immediately resume time waived trials. However, readiness conferences for time waived cases will afford the parties an opportunity to seek meaningful resolution of these matters.

Defendants in Santa Clara County Traffic matters are also being assisted by the Court's incorporation of both the Ability to Pay tool and license hold release options for defendants with delinquent traffic payments.

[Ability to Pay Tool](#)

This online system is an optional way to request a fine reduction for your traffic ticket in cases of financial need.

Use this tool to:

- Request a reduction in your traffic fine
- Request a payment plan
- Request Community Service
- Request more time to pay your ticket

[Failure To Pay, License Holds – Released Upon Payment Plan](#)

If a defendant has a delinquent traffic violation, resulting in a hold placed on their driver's license, the Court will release the hold within 48 hours after the defendant signs up for a payment plan.