

NEWS RELEASE

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA

COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO



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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT: TEMPORARY CHANGE TO CRIMINAL CASE PROCESSES NECESSARY DUE TO UNAVAILABILITY OF PUBLIC DEFENDERS

Effective immediately, the Court will temporarily change its processes for criminal cases as described below, Presiding Judge Rochelle C. East and Court Executive Officer Brandon E. Riley announced today.

As mandated by San Francisco's charter, the San Francisco Public Defender's Office provides legal representation to the City's indigent criminal defendants. For the past several months, the San Francisco Public Defender's Office has declared its lawyers "unavailable" and refused to represent indigent defendants. Until recently, private attorneys provided through the Bar Association of San Francisco agreed to represent those defendants rejected by the Public Defender's Office. Those private attorneys' caseloads have now increased to the point where they will no longer accept new appointments. As a result, the Court has kept defendants in custody, continuing their cases day-to-day, awaiting an available attorney. Consistent with Constitutional mandates, the Court will be required to release some

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defendants from pre-trial custody because they do not have an attorney to represent them. The Court will evaluate each case individually, taking into consideration the nature of the charges, the impact on public safety, the availability of an attorney to represent the defendant, and the Court's duties under statutes and the California and U.S. Constitutions.

While the Public Defender's Office is declaring itself unavailable to accept new clients, the Court is facing an unprecedented number of misdemeanor cases, most of which must be brought to trial within 45 days. In most misdemeanor matters, the defendant is out of custody. The Court will prioritize cases for trial as required by law: In-custody felonies first, followed by in-custody misdemeanors, out-of-custody felonies, and out-of-custody misdemeanors. In the event that the Court has insufficient resources to hear all matters in the time required by statute, the Court will dismiss those matters, when appropriate, in the interests of justice, and while fulfilling the Court's statutory and constitutional duties.

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