

GUIDELINES FOR THE COMPLEX LITIGATION PROGRAM

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO
JUDGE DAVID COHN
DEPARTMENT S-26**

THE SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY COMPLEX LITIGATION PROGRAM

The Complex Litigation Department for the Superior Court of the State of California, County of San Bernardino, is located at the San Bernardino Justice Center, 247 West Third Street, San Bernardino, CA 92415-0210, Department S-26, Judge David Cohn presiding. Telephone numbers for Department S-26 are 909-521-3519 (judicial assistant) and 909-708-8866 (court attendant).

These guidelines govern complex litigation only in Department S-26. When complex cases are assigned to other Departments other than Department S-26, the judges may or may not choose to follow all or some of these guidelines.

DEFINITION OF COMPLEX LITIGATION

As defined by California Rules of Court, rule 3.400(a), a complex case is one that requires exceptional judicial management to avoid placing unnecessary burdens on the court or the litigants and to expedite the case, keep costs reasonable, and promote effective decision making by the court, the parties, and counsel.

Complex cases typically have one or more of the following features:

- A large number of separately represented parties.
- Extensive motion practice raising difficult or novel issues that will be time-consuming to resolve.
- A substantial amount of documentary evidence.
- A large number of witnesses.
- Coordination with related actions pending in one or more courts in other

counties or states or in a federal court.

- Substantial post-judgment judicial supervision.

Complex cases may include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following types of cases:

- Antitrust and trade regulation claims.
- Construction defect claims involving many parties or structures.
- Securities claims or investment losses involving many parties.
- Environmental or toxic tort claims involving many parties.
- Mass torts.
- Class actions.
- Claims brought under the Private Attorney General Act (PAGA).
- Insurance claims arising out of the types of claims listed above.
- Judicial Council Coordinated Proceedings (JCCP).
- Cases involving complex financial, scientific, or technological issues.

CASES ASSIGNED TO THE COMPLEX LITIGATION DEPARTMENT

A. Cases Designated by a Plaintiff as Complex or Provisionally Complex

All cases designated by a plaintiff as complex or provisionally complex on the Civil Case Cover Sheet (Judicial Council Form CM-100) will be assigned initially to the Complex Litigation Department. The Court will issue an Initial Case Management Conference Order and schedule an Initial Case Management Conference as provided by California Rules of Court, rule 3.750, for the earliest practicable date, generally within approximately seventy-five days of the filing of the complaint.

A plaintiff designating the case as complex or provisionally complex must serve the Initial Case Management Conference Order and a copy of these guidelines on all parties at the earliest opportunity before the conference, and must file proof of service of the summons and complaint and proof of service of the Initial Case Management Conference Order with the court.

A defendant who agrees that the case is complex or provisionally complex may indicate a "Joinder" on the Civil Case Cover Sheet (Form CM- 100).

A defendant who disagrees that the case is complex or provisionally complex may raise the issue with the court at the Initial Case Management Conference.

B. Cases Counter-Designated By a Defendant as Complex or Provisionally Complex

All cases which were not designated by a plaintiff as complex or provisionally complex, but which are counter-designated by a defendant (or cross-defendant) as complex or provisionally complex on the Civil Case Cover Sheet (Judicial Council Form CM-100), will be re-assigned to the Complex Litigation Department. At such time, the Court will schedule an Initial Case Management

Conference for the earliest practicable date, generally within approximately forty-five days. A defendant (or cross-defendant) counter-designating the case as complex or provisionally complex must serve a copy of these guidelines on all parties at the earliest opportunity.

A plaintiff or other party who disagrees with the counter-designation may raise the issue with the court at the Initial Case Management Conference.

C. Other Cases Assigned to the Complex Litigation Department

Whether or not the parties designate the case as complex or provisionally complex, the following cases will be initially assigned to the Complex Litigation Department:

- All Construction Defect Cases.
- All Class Actions.
- All Cases Involving Private Attorney General Act (PAGA) Claims.¹
- Judicial Council Coordinated Proceedings (JCCP) if so assigned by the Chair of the Judicial Council.

REFERRAL TO THE COMPLEX LITIGATION DEPARTMENT BY OTHER DEPARTMENTS

A judge who is assigned to a case may, but is not required to, refer the case to the Complex Litigation Department to be considered for treatment as a complex case if (1) the case was previously designated by a party as complex or provisionally complex, or (2) the referring judge deems the case to involve issues of considerable legal, evidentiary, or logistical complexity, such that the case would be best served by assignment to the Complex Litigation Department. Such a referral is not a re-assignment, but is a referral for consideration.

In any case referred by another judge to the Complex Litigation Department, the Complex Litigation Department will schedule an Initial Case Management Conference, generally within thirty days, and will provide notice to all parties along with a copy of these guidelines. If the case is determined by the Complex Litigation Department to be appropriate for treatment as a complex case, the case will be re-assigned to the Complex Litigation Department at that time. If the case is determined by the Complex Litigation Department not to be complex, it will be returned to the referring judge.

STAY OF DISCOVERY PENDING THE INITIAL CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

For cases that are assigned to the Complex Litigation Department, discovery is automatically stayed pending the Initial Case Management Conference, or until further order of the court. Discovery is not automatically stayed, however, for cases that were initially assigned to other departments and are referred to the Complex Litigation Department for consideration, unless the referring judge stays discovery pending determination by the Complex Litigation whether the case should be treated as complex.

¹ The Civil Case cover Sheet (Judicial Council Form CM-100) may not reflect the presence of a PAGA claim. PAGA claims erroneously assigned to non-complex departments are subject to re-assignment to the Complex Litigation Department by the assigned judge.

OBLIGATION TO MEET AND CONFER BEFORE THE INITIAL CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

Prior to the Initial Case Management Conference, all parties are required to meet and confer to discuss the items specified in California Rules of Court, rule 3.750(b) , and they are required to prepare a Joint Statement specifying the following:

- Whether additional parties are likely to be added, and a proposed date by which any such parties must be served.
- Each party's position whether the case should or should not be treated as a complex.
- Whether there are applicable arbitration agreements.
- Whether there is related litigation pending in state or federal court.
- A description of the major legal and factual issues involved in the case.
- Any discovery or trial preparation procedures on which the parties agree. The parties should address what discovery will be required, whether discovery should be conducted in phases or otherwise limited, and whether the parties agree to electronic service and an electronic document depository and, if so, their preferred web-based electronic service provider.
- An estimate of the time needed to conduct discovery and to prepare for trial.
- The parties' views on an appropriate mechanism for Alternative Dispute Resolution.
- Any other matters on which the parties request a court ruling.

The Joint Statement is to be filed directly in the Complex Litigation Department no later than ten days before the conference. This requirement of a Joint Statement is not satisfied by using Judicial Council Form CM-110, pursuant to California Rules of Court, rule 3.725(a), or by parties filing individual statements. Failure to participate meaningfully in the "meet and confer" process or failure to submit a Joint Statement may result in the imposition of monetary or other sanctions.

THE INITIAL CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

At the Initial Case Management Conference, the court will determine whether the action is a complex case, as required by California Rules of Court, rule 3.403. If the court determines the case is complex, the court will issue further management-related orders at that time. If the court determines the case is not complex, the case may be retained by the judge, but not treated as a complex case, or it may be reassigned to a different department; if the case was referred by another judge and the case is found to be inappropriate for treatment as a complex case, the case will be returned to the referring judge.

At the Initial Case Management Conference, the court and counsel will address the subjects listed in California Rules of Court, rule 3.750(b), and all issues presented by the Joint Statement.

Once a case is deemed complex, the function of the Initial Case Management Conference and all subsequent Case Management Conferences is to facilitate discovery, motion practice, and trial preparation, and to discuss appropriate mechanisms for settlement negotiations.

Lead counsel should attend the Initial Case Management Conference. Counsel with secondary

responsibility for the case may attend in lieu of lead counsel, but only if such counsel is fully informed about the case and has full authority to proceed on all issues to be addressed at the conference. "Special Appearance" counsel (lawyers who are not the attorneys of record) are not allowed.

REMOTE APPEARANCES AT CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCES

All Case Management Conferences will be conducted remotely. In person attendance is not required unless specifically ordered by the court. CourtCall appearances are scheduled by telephoning CourtCall at (888) 882-6878. See www.CourtCall.com for further information.

CASE MANAGEMENT ORDERS

The court may issue formal, written case management orders. Typically, complex construction defect cases will proceed pursuant to such an order. Other cases involving numerous parties or unusual logistical complexity may be appropriate for such a written order as well. The need for a written case management order will be discussed at the Initial Case Management Conference or at later times as the need arises. The parties will prepare such orders as directed by the court.

ADDITIONAL CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCES

After the Initial Case Management Conference, the court will schedule additional case management conferences as necessary and appropriate on a case-by-case basis.

As with the Initial Case Management Conference, lead counsel should attend all case management conferences. Counsel with secondary responsibility for the case may attend in lieu of lead counsel, but only if such counsel is fully informed about the case and has full authority to proceed on all issues to be addressed. "Special Appearance" counsel (lawyers who are not the attorneys of record) are not allowed. As with the initial Case Management Conference, all additional case management conferences are conducted remotely, via CourtCall. In-person attendance is not required unless specifically ordered by the court.

VOLUNTARY SETTLEMENT CONFERENCES

If all parties agree, the court may be available to conduct settlement conferences. Requests for settlement conferences may be made at any Case Management Conference or hearing, or by telephoning the Complex Litigation Department.

MANDATORY SETTLEMENT CONFERENCES

In appropriate cases, the court may order mandatory settlement conferences. Parties with full settlement authority, including insurance adjustors with full settlement authority, must attend all mandatory settlement conferences.

MANAGEMENT OF CLASS ACTIONS

In class actions and putative class actions that are deemed complex, the Initial Case Management Conference will function as the Case Conference required by California Rules of Court, rules 3.762 and 3.763.

OBLIGATION TO MEET AND CONFER REGARDING MOTIONS

In addition to any other requirement to "meet and confer" imposed by statute or Rule of Court in connection with motions, all counsel and unrepresented parties are required to "meet and confer" in a good faith attempt to eliminate the necessity for a hearing on a pending motion, or to resolve or narrow some of the issues. The moving party must arrange for the conference, which can be conducted in person or by telephone or video conference, to be held no later than four calendar days before the hearing. **No later than two calendar days before the hearing, the moving party is required to file a notice in Department S-26, with service on all parties, specifying whether the conference has occurred and specifying any issues that have been resolved.** If the need for a hearing has been eliminated, the motion may simply be taken off-calendar. Failure to participate meaningfully in the conference may result in the imposition of monetary or other sanctions.

The obligation to "meet and confer" does not apply to applications to appear *pro hac vice* or to motions to withdraw as counsel of record.

FORMAT OF PAPERS FILED IN CONNECTION WITH MOTIONS

Counsel and unrepresented parties must comply with all applicable statutes, Rules of Court, and Local Rules regarding motions, including but not limited to their format. Additionally, **exhibits attached to motions and oppositions must be separately tabbed at the bottom**, so that exhibits can be easily identified and retrieved.

ELECTRONIC SERVICE AND DOCUMENT DEPOSITORY

The parties in cases involving numerous parties or large quantities of documents are encouraged to agree to electronic service for all pleadings, motions, and other materials filed with the court as well as all discovery requests, discovery responses, and correspondence. Nevertheless, parties must still submit "hard" copies to the court of any pleadings, motions, or other materials that are to be filed.

INFORMAL DISCOVERY CONFERENCES

The court is available for informal discovery conferences at the request of counsel. Such conferences may address the scope of allowable discovery, the order of discovery, issues of privilege, and other discovery issues that may arise. Counsel may contact the Complex Litigation Department to schedule an informal conference.

Before filing any discovery motion, the moving party is required to "meet and confer" with counsel as required by statute. If the "meet and confer" exchange fails to resolve all issues, the

moving party is **required** to request an informal conference with the court before filing any discovery motion. Making a request for an informal discovery conference automatically stays the deadline for filing a motion.

Informal Discovery Conferences are conducted remotely, via the BlueJeans Video Conferencing. Attendees will need to download the BlueJeans program (available from the app stores for IOS or Android) to a computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone. If the device to be used does not have camera capability, the BlueJeans application offers an audio-only option. Video appearance, however, is encouraged. Counsel will be provided with a link to connect to the conference at the appointed time.

Briefing is not allowed, though a one-page statement of issues and the relevant discovery record should be lodged with the court (but not filed) at least one day before the informal discovery conference.

CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENT AND PROTECTIVE ORDERS

Proposed protective orders dealing with confidential documents should state expressly that nothing in the order excuses compliance with California Rules of Court, rules 2.550 and 2.551. Proposed protective orders that are not compliant with the requirements of the Rules of Court will be rejected.

THE PRETRIAL CONFERENCE

The court will schedule a pre-trial conference, generally thirty to sixty days in advance of the trial. Counsel and the court will discuss the following matters, which counsel should be fully informed to address:

- Whether trial will be by jury or by the court.
- Anticipated motions *in limine* or the need for other pre-trial rulings.
- The anticipated length of trial.
- The order of proof and scheduling of witnesses, including realistic time estimates for each witness for both direct and cross-examination.
- If there is a large number of anticipated witnesses, whether counsel wish to have photographs taken of each witness to refresh the jury's recollection of each witness during closing argument and deliberation.
- Whether deposition testimony will be presented by video.
- The need for evidentiary rulings on any lengthy deposition testimony to be presented at trial.
- Stipulations of fact.
- Stipulations regarding the admission of exhibits into evidence.
- If there is a large amount of documentary evidence, how the exhibits will be presented in a meaningful way for the jury.
- The use of technology at trial, including but not limited to electronic evidence.
- Any unusual legal or evidentiary issues that may arise during the trial.

THE TRIAL READINESS CONFERENCE

Trial Readiness Conferences are held at 9:00 a.m., typically on the Thursday morning

preceding the scheduled trial date. Counsel and unrepresented parties must comply fully with Local Rule 411.2, unless otherwise directed by the court. Failure to have the required materials available for the court may result in the imposition of monetary or other sanctions.

TRIALS

Trial dates are generally Monday through Thursday, 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Lengthy trials, however, may require deviation from this schedule. Unless otherwise ordered by the court, counsel and unrepresented parties must be present in the courtroom at least ten minutes before each session of trial is scheduled to begin.

Whenever possible, issues to be addressed outside the presence of the jury should be scheduled in a manner to avoid the need for the jury to wait.