

Superior Court of California, County of Contra Costa

Trial Court Personnel

There are a number of jobs in a courtroom. Some people who work there are employees of the court itself, while some work for other agencies – like the Sheriff's Department.

Here are some of the people you might see in a courtroom.

1) A judicial officer

Every courtroom will have a judicial officer – someone to make decisions about the problem that people came to court about. He or she will wear a black robe and sit at the front of the courtroom facing everyone else.

a. A judge

Superior court judges are elected by voters of the county on a non-partisan ballot at a general election. (Vacancies are filled by appointment of the Governor.) The term of office for a trial judge in California is six years.

b. A commissioner

A person selected by the judges of the court and given the power to hear and make decisions in certain kinds of legal matters.

c. A temporary judge

A lawyer who has been approved by the court to substitute for a judge. Also called a "pro tem [pro tempore] judge."

2) A clerk of the court

Every courtroom will have a clerk - a person chosen by the judge to help manage cases, keep court records, maintain exhibits, and give other administrative support.

3) A bailiff

Every courtroom will have a bailiff - a person that is in charge of security in the court. Bailiffs are picked by sheriffs or marshals.

4) A court reporter

Many courtrooms will have a court reporter - someone who writes down, word for word, what is said during the proceedings. They generally use a stenographic machine, shorthand, or a recording device. People can ask for a copy of this official record.

5) A court interpreter

Sometimes, a person who is fluent in English and the language of a court user is in the courtroom to help the non-English speaking person understand what is going on. In some cases (such as criminal cases) the interpreter is paid for by the court. Often, (in most civil cases) the interpreter is a friend of the court user.

6) One or more lawyers (also called attorneys, or council)

Often, people involved in a lawsuit will ask for the help of a person qualified to represent them in a court and to advise them on legal matters. Normally, the client will pay the lawyer for his or her services.

7) A district attorney (also called a public prosecutor)

In a criminal case, there will be a public official who has been appointed or elected to represent the state in a particular judicial district.

8) A public defender

In a criminal case, if the defendant can't afford to hire a lawyer, the court may appoint a lawyer who is paid by the government to represent people free of charge. This lawyer is called a "public defender."

9) A lawyer for a public agency

Sometimes, there will be a lawyer from an agency representing one side or the other in court. For example, in child support cases involving the state's Department of Child Support Services, a lawyer for the DCSS may be at court. In child dependency cases, a Court-Appointed Special Advocate (C.A.S.A.) may be in court to advocate on behalf of abused and neglected children.

SUPPORT STAFF

Outside of the courtroom, a large staff supports the work of the court. Professionals work in the:

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| Alternative Dispute Resolution program, | Human Resources, |
| Clerks' Offices | Information Technology, |
| Collections and Compliance Unit, | Interpreters, |
| the Executive Office, | Judicial Secretaries, |
| Facilities Projects and Maintenance, | Jury Services, |
| Family and Investigative Court Services, | Legal Research |
| Family Law Facilitators and Child | Strategic Planning, |
| Custody Recommending Counseling, | And other areas of service |
| Financial Services, | |