

# Jackie Lacey

District Attorney  
<http://da.lacounty.gov>



NEWS RELEASE

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## **District Attorney Jackie Lacey Directs Deputy District Attorneys To Help Reduce Jail Population During Pandemic**

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey announced today that she has directed her deputy district attorneys to take steps to reduce the number of people both in local jails and courthouses as part of her office's response to help curb the spread of the coronavirus.

"I have asked my attorneys to consider the health risks in every decision they make," District Attorney Lacey said. "I have directed them to consider ways to keep nonviolent felony and misdemeanor offenders out of our jails and courthouses during this pandemic."

District Attorney Lacey instructed her managers during a March 16 video chat to delay the filing of new cases and re-evaluate pretrial cases to allow nonviolent offenders who do not pose a danger to the community to remain outside the criminal justice system during this national emergency. She urged them to look at both the pending charges and the defendant's criminal history to determine their risk to the community at this time.

In keeping with that directive, District Attorney Lacey is working with Sheriff Alex Villanueva, Public Defender Ricardo Garcia and Alternate Public Defender Erika Anzoategui to review approximately 2,000 cases involving in-custody defendants using the same standards to determine if they are a risk to public safety or can be safely returned to the community on their own recognizance while awaiting trial. If they cannot reach an agreement on a particular defendant, the court will review the case and make a determination.

Earlier, in a March 14 email to all employees, District Attorney Lacey directed her deputy district attorneys to consider whether a defendant is considered by health officials to be at a high risk of exposure to coronavirus as a factor in either setting bail or agreeing to a defendant's release on his or her own recognizance.

To help further reduce the jail population, District Attorney Lacey has instructed her deputy district attorneys to not request that defendants be remanded on probation or parole violations on nonviolent

and non-serious crimes unless the defendant has demonstrated that he or she is a danger to the community.

She has recommended that deputy district attorneys use the Proposition 115 guidelines that allow law enforcement officers to testify to witness statements at preliminary hearings in an effort to reduce the number of civilian witnesses having to appear in courthouses during the pandemic.

District Attorney Lacey also has directed Head Deputy District Attorneys to expand the use of the existing Pre-filing Diversion Program (PDP). This program diverts people from entering the criminal justice system on specified misdemeanors and felonies by opting for office hearings as opposed to criminal filings.

As for setting future court dates, deputy district attorneys were advised against objecting to continuances unless necessary to prevent a serious case from being dismissed.

Additionally, deputy district attorneys were informed that they should concur with requests for general time waivers and continuances of jury trials for an extended period of time for out-of-custody defendants.

As to community service, including work performed through the California Department of Transportation, deputy district attorneys were directed to temporarily suspend or extend pending due dates for completion and not use these options at this time unless completion dates may be extended beyond the usual due dates. In addition, they are being directed to agree to put progress reports over for several months.

District Attorney Lacey also has released new Fraud Alerts warning consumers about coronavirus-related scams and price gouging and posted a video message addressing the impact of the coronavirus on her office's operations. They may be viewed at <http://da.lacounty.gov>.

In an effort to reduce the spread of this disease, District Attorney Lacey has implemented alternate work schedules for all of her 2,200 employees. This includes flexible work schedules and using technology so that attorneys and other staff members may work remotely.

Employees have been encouraged to prepare for trials, interview witnesses, conduct legal research and, in some cases, even file criminal cases remotely, when possible.

No District Attorney employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19. In an abundance of caution, all employees making reports of possible exposure to the coronavirus are assigned to telework until the guidelines provided by the county's Public Health Department for a safe return to work are followed.

District Attorney Lacey continues to work closely with county and court officials to determine how best we can continue to maintain public safety during this public health crisis.

“We have a constitutional duty to serve the public by keeping the residents of Los Angeles County safe from violent crime, even during national emergencies,” District Attorney Lacey said. “I want to thank the people in my office for their dedication and cooperation during these unprecedented times.”

### **[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)**

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.