

# **GUIDELINES FOR THE COMPLEX LITIGATION PROGRAM**

## **SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO**

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### **THE SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY COMPLEX LITIGATION**

Complex Litigation cases are heard by all departments for the Superior Court of the State of California, County of San Bernardino. We are located at the San Bernardino Justice Center, 247 West Third Street, San Bernardino, CA 92415-0210.

These are guidelines only. Judges may or may not choose to follow all or some of these guidelines. Check with the individual department.

### **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 DEEMED COMPLEX LITIGATION**

### **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 to any department for handling. The Court may 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 also be deemed a Complex Litigation case. At such time, the Court may 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**

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

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

## **STAY OF DISCOVERY PENDING THE INITIAL CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE**

For cases that are deemed Complex Litigation, discovery is automatically stayed pending the Initial Case Management Conference, or until further order of the court, or unless the parties agree otherwise.

## **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 four court 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 will be retained by the judge, but not treated as a complex case.

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**

Counsel may attend the initial CMC either in person or remotely via CourtCall or Zoom.

## **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 may 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, until further order of the Court, all additional case management conferences may be conducted remotely.

## **VOLUNTARY SETTLEMENT CONFERENCES**

If all parties agree, the court is available to conduct settlement conferences. Requests for settlement conferences may be made at any Case Management Conference or hearing, or by telephoning the 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 the Department, 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. The Court may put in place a Discovery Conference Order. 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 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. Briefing is not required.

### **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 may 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.