



**SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT**

Kim M. Bartleson, CCE
Court Executive Officer/
Jury Commissioner

Joyce D. Hinrichs
Presiding Judge

January 26, 2021

Michele Stephens
Humboldt County Public Health Director
529 I Street
Eureka, CA 95501
and via email to mstephens@co.humboldt.ca.us

Dear Ms. Stephens:

I write today to request that my court staff and judicial officers as well as our justice partners in the Humboldt County District Attorney's Office and in the Humboldt County Public Defender and Conflict Counsel Offices be classified as essential workers in the Phase 1B Tier 1 category and receive prioritization of COVID-19 vaccinations as supplies are received in Humboldt County. The Superior Court of California, County of Humboldt, is a constitutionally mandated essential service. With the exception of a few days at the beginning of the statewide shutdown, our courts have been open and available for all matters except civil jury trials. This is possible due to the collaborative efforts of our court team, our justice partners and the Department of Public Health.

The Court is handling as many matters as possible remotely, but criminal matters often require in-person appearances. In-person appearances such as these do expose court staff, judicial officers and justice partners to increased risk. The Court's role, along with the responsibilities of our justice partners, is essential to the safety of our community and the rights of individuals who come before us. As the pandemic continues, our ability to provide these essential services is hampered by staff shortages due to required quarantines because of possible exposure to the virus and isolations related to contracting the virus. Similarly, justice partners are facing the same issues within their offices. As an entity that is providing these constitutionally mandated essential services, we would request that our court staff, our judicial officers, as well as our justice partners, be given the opportunity for vaccinations within the Phase 1B, Tier 1 roll-out. We obviously would attend any vaccination clinic available, but would like to offer our courthouse as a location to assist with vaccinations of members of our court and possibly our justice partners if that is deemed more convenient.

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I have not had an opportunity to speak with our local Tribal Court Judges. I would, however, suggest that, because of the essential service their Tribal Courts provide to our local indigenous communities, those judges and their staff should also receive this same designation and vaccinations prioritization.

We look forward to working with you to implement a vaccination strategy at your earliest convenience. I cannot emphasize enough that the entire justice system in Humboldt County is in peril if our staff or judicial officers or justice partners become ill or have to quarantine. I am happy to discuss the issue in more detail.

Sincerely,



Joyce D. Hinrichs
Presiding Judge
Humboldt Superior Court

cc: Amy S. Nilsen, County Administrative Officer
Connie Beck, Director, Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services
Maggie Fleming, Humboldt County District Attorney
Marek Reavis, Humboldt County Public Defender
Meagan O'Connell, Humboldt County Conflict Counsel