



BCSC 2026-AO-01

**SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF BUTTE**

In the Matter of
JUDICIAL DUTIES

ORDER FOR 2026 COURT
ASSIGNMENTS

This Order is made to facilitate the distribution of files and proper routing of matters by court staff and supersedes any previous orders or addendums.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED THAT:

- I. Effective January 1, 2026, the following matters shall be referred directly by staff to the named judicial officer indicated unless otherwise expressly assigned:

A. TO: JUDGE JESUS A. RODRIGUEZ – Department 3

2026 PRESIDING JUDGE;

2026 PRESIDING JUDGE OF THE JUVENILE COURT;

All Welfare and Institutions Code § 300 matters;

All Adoptions;

All petitions to declare a minor free from parental custody and control pursuant to Family Code §7840;

All petitions to inspect adoption and birth records;

All Juvenile Welfare and Institutions Code § 601 and § 602 matters;

All infractions under Education Code § 48293(a);

1 All matters pertaining to the administration of the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027

2 Grand Juries;

3 All other matters as assigned.

4
5 B. TO: JUDGE MICHAEL R. DEEMS – Department 2

6 2026 ASSISTANT PRESIDING JUDGE: Acts a Presiding Judge in the absence of
7 the Presiding Judge:

8 Supervisory duties of Collaborative Courts:

9 All felony matters where the defendant's last name begins with A-EA, and

10 Co-Defendants as specified in "2026 Criminal Co-Defendant Assignments"

11 (Exhibit A);

12 All other matters as assigned.

13
14 C. TO: JUDGE VIRGINIA L. GINGERY – Department 7

15 2026 SUPERVISING JUDGE OF THE CRIMINAL DIVISION

16 All felony matters where the defendant's last name begins with LF-RI, and

17 Co-Defendants as specified in "2026 Criminal Co-Defendant Assignments"

18 (Exhibit A);

19 All other matters as assigned.

20
21 D. TO: JUDGE KIMBERLY MERRIFIELD – Department 5

22 All felony matters where the defendant's last name begins with EB-LE, and

23 Co-Defendants as specified in "2026 Criminal Co-Defendant Assignments"

24 (Exhibit A);

25 All other matters as assigned.

26
27 E. TO: JUDGE KRISTEN A. LUCENA – Department 4

28 All felony matters where the defendant's last name begins with RJ-Z and

1 Co-Defendants as specified in "2026 Criminal Co-Defendant Assignments"
2 (Exhibit A);

3 All other matters as assigned.
4

5 F. TO: JUDGE PHILIP H. HEITHECKER – Department 10

6 All other misdemeanor matters where the defendant's last name begins with A-E
7 and S-Z;

8 All Penal Code § 415 and § 484-488-490.1(a) infractions where the defendant's
9 last name begins with A-E and S-Z;

10 All matters pertaining to elections, including matters brought under Elections Code
11 § 2100 and § 2142(a);

12 All mandatory civil settlement conferences (MSC) calendared by the Civil
13 Division as assigned;

14 All other matters as assigned.
15

16 G. TO: JUDGE RUBY S. NEUMANN – Department 8

17 All Parole and Post Community Release Supervision Revocation Petitions;

18 All misdemeanor DUI matters where the defendant is not represented by a Public
19 Defender;

20 All other misdemeanor matters where the defendant's last name begins with F-R;

21 All Penal Code § 415 and § 484-488-490.1(a) infractions where the defendant's
22 last name begins with F-R;

23 All Juvenile infraction matters;

24 All Guardianships of the Person Only;

25 All other matters as assigned.
26

27 H. TO: JUDGE CLARE KEITHLEY – Department 11

28 2026 SUPERVISING JUDGE OF THE FAMILY DIVISION;

1 Family law matters, except for Butte County Department of Child Support Services
2 Title IV-D matters, as randomly assigned to equal fifty percent of the total filings;
3 All other matters as assigned.

4
5 I. TO: JUDGE CORIE J. CARAWAY – Department 9

6 Family law matters, except for Butte County Department of Child Support Services
7 Title IV-D, as randomly assigned to equal fifty percent of the total filings;
8 All CRC 5.83 Family Law Case Management Status Conferences;
9 All other matters as assigned.

10
11 J. TO: JUDGE TAMARA L. MOSBARGER – Department 1

12 2026 SUPERVISING JUDGE OF THE CIVIL DIVISION;
13 All unlimited civil matters randomly assigned;
14 All asset forfeiture cases;
15 All probate cases, excluding Guardianships of the Person only;
16 All petitions under Welfare and Institutions Code § 5250 and § 8103;
17 All LPS conservatorship cases;
18 All other matters as assigned.

19
20 K. TO: JUDGE STEPHEN E. BENSON – Department 6

21 All unlimited civil matters as randomly assigned;
22 All limited civil matters;
23 All civil matters relating to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA);
24 All firearm petitions under Welfare and Institutions Code § 8102 and § 8103;
25 All dog petitions under Food and Agricultural Code § 31601 et seq.;
26 All petitions for change of name and/or gender;
27 All CARE Act petitions;
28 All other matters as assigned.

1 L. TO: COMMISSIONER LEAH B. SEARS

2 All misdemeanor DUI matters where the defendant is represented by a Public
3 Defender;

4 Collaborative Court Calendars –

5 All cases referred to and accepted into:

6 Drug Court calendar;

7 HIDE (High Intensity Driving under the Influence Enforcement) calendar;

8 Domestic Violence calendar;

9 Veterans Treatment Court calendar;

10 Mental Health Diversion calendar;

11 Military Diversion calendar;

12 All other matters as assigned.
13

14 M. TO: COMMISSIONER MARK EMMONS

15 All Butte County Department of Child Support Services-Title IV-D matters;

16 All Penal Code § 270 and § 166(a)(4) matters related to Butte County Department
17 of Child Support Services-Title IV-D matters;

18 All Small Claims matters, when a Judge Pro Tempore is not available;

19 All Adult infraction matters, excluding Penal Code § 415 and § 484-488-490.1(a),
20 excluding infractions under Education Code § 48293(a);

21 All Limited Unlawful Detainer matters;

22 All Civil Harassment matters;

23 All other matters as assigned.
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1 II. The following general principles are applicable in referring matters pursuant to these
2 assignments:

3
4 A. Orders submitted for signature shall be routed to the judicial officer who made the
5 order. If the judicial officer who made the order is unavailable, then it shall be
6 routed pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure § 635, as follows:

- 7 i. to the Supervising Judge of the division in which the unavailable judicial
8 officer presided; or
9 ii. to the Presiding Judge.

10 For the purposes of this section, a judge is unavailable for signature if the judge is
11 away from the court for more than five (5) consecutive Court days.

12
13 III. The following general principles apply when determining reassignment after a
14 disqualification of judicial officer:

15
16 A. In the event a judicial officer is disqualified, or if the parties do not stipulate to a
17 Commissioner (if required), the case shall be referred to the Supervising Judge of
18 the division for reassignment, with exception of the following:

- 19 i. If the Supervising Judge is disqualified, the case shall be referred to the
20 Presiding Judge for reassignment.
21 ii. If the Presiding Judge is disqualified the case shall be referred to the
22 Assistant Presiding Judge for reassignment, pursuant to Code of Civil
23 Procedure § 170.3(a)(2).
24 iii. In divisions where only two Judges preside, if one is disqualified, the
25 case shall be reassigned to the Judge who has not been disqualified. This
26 shall also apply to the Criminal Misdemeanor assignments.
27 iv. In the Criminal Division, by this order, cases shall be reassigned
28 according to Exhibit B.

1 v. In the Juvenile Division, if the assigned judge is disqualified, the matter
2 will be referred to the Presiding Judge for assignment.

3 vi. Assignments of non-Criminal cases are for all purposes, within the
4 meaning of Code of Civil Procedure § 170.6(a)(2). Assignments of non-
5 Criminal cases as a result of a disqualification, recusal or unavailability
6 of another judicial officer, will be assignments for all purposes, within
7 the meaning of Code of Civil Procedure § 170.6(a)(2).
8

9 B. Assignments of Criminal cases are for all purposes within the meaning of Code of
10 Civil Procedure § 170.6(a)(2) effective upon the first court appearance on the
11 criminal calendar of the assigned judge. Assignments of Criminal cases as a result
12 of a disqualification, recusal, or unavailability of another judicial officer, will be
13 assignments for all purposes, within the meaning of Code of Civil Procedure §
14 170.6(a)(2), effective upon the first court appearance before that judicial officer.
15

16 C. If, at the felony trial assignment calendar, a jury trial is assigned to a trial judge
17 other than the previously assigned felony alpha judge, the parties will have the
18 right to exercise a peremptory challenge pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure §
19 170.6(a)(2) as to the newly assigned trial judge, unless the party has previously
20 exercised a peremptory challenge in the matter.
21

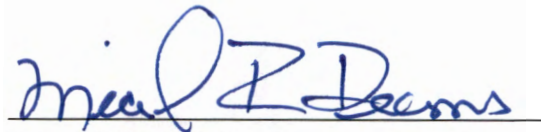
22 D. In the event that all available judicial officers are disqualified, the matter shall be
23 heard by a visiting judge on the Shasta Exchange calendar or as otherwise
24 assigned.
25

26 E. At the request of a neighboring court, the Presiding Judge will assign a Judge of
27 the Butte Superior Court to assist as needed, to include Shasta Superior Court on
28 the Exchange calendar.

1 IV. As permitted by California Rules of Court, Rule 2.810-2.811, a court-appointed
2 temporary judge ("Judge Pro Tempore") is assigned to hear all Small Claims Matters.
3

4 V. Pursuant to Section 246 of the Welfare and Institutions Code of the State of California,
5 Judges Stephen E. Benson, Corie J. Caraway, Michael R. Deems, Virginia Gingery,
6 Philip H. Heithecker, Clare Keithley, Kristen A. Lucena, Kimberly Merrifield, Tamara
7 L. Mosbarger, Ruby S. Neumann, and Jesus A. Rodriguez are designated as Judges of
8 the Juvenile Court.
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12 Dated: October 30, 2025



Hon. Michael R. Deems
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court

2026 Criminal Co-Defendant Assignments

Cases filed in the month of:	Assigned to:
January May September	Michael R. Deems – Department 2
February June October	Kimberly Merrifield – Department 5
March July November	Virginia L. Gingery – Department 7
April August December	Kristen A. Lucena – Department 4

2026 Criminal Judicial Officer Reassignment after Disqualification

Disqualified Judicial Officer	Reassigned Judicial Officer
Michael R. Deems	Kimberly Merrifield
Kimberly Merrifield	Michael R. Deems
Michael R. Deems and Kimberly Merrifield	Virginia L. Gingery
Virginia L. Gingery	Kristen A. Lucena
Kristen A. Lucena	Virginia L. Gingery
Virginia L. Gingery and Kristen A. Lucena	Michael R. Deems
Philip H. Heithecker and Ruby S. Neumann	Supervising Judge of the Criminal Division