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## Superior Court of California, County of Merced

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### Merced Superior Court Launches Homeless Court

The Superior Court of California, County of Merced, is launching a new Homeless Court Program this month in collaboration with justice and community partners.

Most of the offenses that will be addressed in Homeless Court are infractions and minor misdemeanors. Instead of paying fines and fees or serving jail time, Homeless Court participants receive credit for community service. To qualify to participate in Homeless Court, the defendant must be experiencing homelessness, including those living in emergency shelters and transitional housing.

Homeless Court is needed in Merced County to increase access to justice for our homeless population. This collaborative court provides an avenue for the final hurdle in their path to securing a driver's license, employment, and housing.

Agencies collaborating in the Homeless Court include: the Public Defender's Office, District Attorney's Office, City Attorney's Office, Conflict Public Defender's Office, City of Merced, Merced of County, Worknet-Merced County and community based organizations, together with Presiding Judge Hon. Donald J. Proietti and Hon. Paul C. Lo.

This team also worked with the Central Presbyterian Church to secure an offsite location for Homeless Court. The Hon. Paul C. Lo will serve as the judge presiding for Homeless Court. The hearings will take place in the Hoffmeister Center at Central Presbyterian Church as this is a more familiar environment and reduces the fear and intimidation that may be associated with the courthouse.

The first court session is scheduled for April 27. To request a case be considered in Homeless Court, please contact the Homeless Court Navigator at [courtnavigator@equusworks.com](mailto:courtnavigator@equusworks.com) or 209-724-2100.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, seating is limited with priority given to participants, attorneys, and service providers. The court sessions will be livestreamed to [The Superior Court of California, County of Merced - Live Public Hearings \(mercedcourt.org\)](https://www.mercedcourt.org).

More information about the Homeless Court Program, see the Court website at [The Superior Court of California, County of Merced - Collaborative Courts \(mercedcourt.org\)](https://www.mercedcourt.org).

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