



Administrative Office of the Courts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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District court operations in Albuquerque changing because of security staff cutbacks

ALBUQUERQUE – In response to reduced security staffing, the Second Judicial District Court will change its operations on Monday to limit the number of people entering the county courthouse in downtown Albuquerque and two other court locations.

The state Supreme Court ordered the operational changes at the district court.

“The safety and well-being of people required to go to court cannot be compromised,” Supreme Court Chief Justice David K. Thomson said today.

“We must take these precautionary steps while the district court works with Bernalillo County and its sheriff’s office to restore security staffing to necessary levels,” said Chief Justice Thomson. “We value our partnership with the County of Bernalillo and especially the hard work and dedication of officers assigned to the courthouse. However, our paramount concern is protecting jurors, witnesses, victims and their families, attorneys, court employees, judges and members of the public who come to the district court for trials, hearings and other court business.”

Increasing security incidents and violence at Courthouses

The security staff reductions by the Bernalillo County Sheriff’s Office (BCSO) come at a time of increased violence at courthouses and in the wake of recent security incidents at the Second Judicial District courthouses. Earlier this year, several family members jumped over a courtroom railing during a hearing and beat the defendant and a detention center officer. Last week, several members of the district attorney’s office were verbally accosted and confronted on their way to a parking lot after a court hearing.

The district court will adjust operations as follows:

- The court clerk’s office will be closed to the public during morning business hours. The main clerk’s office in the courthouse will be open to the public from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. and the domestic violence clerk’s office will be open from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. The clerk’s office will continue to respond to telephone calls and electronic filings submitted in court cases.

- The self-help center will be limited to online and telephone inquiries. People cannot enter the courthouse to use the self-help resources in person.
- Civil, family and children's court case hearings will be conducted remotely through online video-audio conferencing rather than in person

No change for criminal and civil trials

Criminal and civil jury trials and some other criminal proceedings, such as sentencing hearings, will continue to be held at the courthouse. There will be no changes for jurors required to report to the courthouse for jury selection and trials.

The district court operates in three locations: the Bernalillo County Courthouse at 400 Lomas Blvd., the Children's Court in the Juvenile Justice Center at 5100 2nd Street NW, and the Judicial Supervision and Diversion Programs at the Public Safety Center at 401 Roma Ave. NW.

The operational changes do not apply to the Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court at 401 Lomas Blvd. NW, which is on the northwestern corner of Lomas and 4th Street across from the district court.

The Second Judicial District Court is the largest and busiest district court in New Mexico, with 30 judges, 11 hearing officers and more than 300 employees. It conducts more than 3,700 hearings and trials each month. Over 7,100 people visit the clerk's and self-help offices monthly. More than 1,600 people report to pretrial services and treatment courts each month at the Public Safety Center.

County owns, maintains the courthouse

Under state law, the sheriff's office is responsible for security at the Second Judicial District Court. The downtown courthouse, the Juvenile Justice Center, and the Public Safety Center are county-owned buildings.

BCSO notified the district court on July 10 that it planned to reduce security personnel at court locations effective Monday, July 21, because of budget constraints. Judicial leaders are changing district court operations temporarily through Aug. 2 while attempting to restore security to adequate staffing levels.

In addition to security screening of people entering the courthouse, deputies respond to duress alarms by judges and court staff when people pose safety threats and they intervene in courtroom disruptions and physical fights in court buildings. So far in 2025, there have been 5,867 calls for service to deputies providing court security.

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