

United States District Court Southern District of California



As the trial courts of the federal government, district courts have jurisdiction to hear nearly all categories of civil and criminal cases. There are 94 federal judicial districts grouped into 11 regional circuits. The Southern District of California as we know it today, separated

from the Central District of California in 1966. It is part of the 9th Circuit and has jurisdiction over San Diego and Imperial Counties. The entire western boundary of the Southern District lies on the Pacific Ocean. The entire southern boundary of the District borders the Republic of Mexico. There are international ports of entry at San Ysidro, Otay Mesa, Tecate, Calexico, and Andrade. The San Ysidro port of entry is the world's busiest land crossing where over 14 million vehicles and 40 million people legally enter the U.S. each year.

San Diego is the 8th largest city in the United States with a population of over 1.3 million people. San Diego County has a population of more than 3 million; Imperial County has a population of 160,000. As a major urban center, the Southern District of California experiences the full range of criminal activities present in any metropolitan area. Because of its proximity to an international border, the District continues to be a major corridor for both illegal immigration and illicit drug trafficking activities. It is not surprising that the Southern District ranks fourth in the nation in federal felony filings.



Community Outreach Programs Committee

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The Learning Center of the Southern District of California

"Building confidence in American justice through education and understanding."

Courtrooms as Classrooms

Seeing the need to supplement the civics education taught in classrooms, and heeding the example of Supreme Court Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and Anthony Kennedy among others, the judges of the Southern District of California have created a number of programs designed to inspire and encourage students to embrace the concepts of justice and responsibility, to clarify for them the responsibilities of the individual within a free society, and to familiarize the students with career opportunities within the legal system.



Presented by the Community Outreach Programs Committee
of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California
In partnership with San Diego City and County Schools
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The judges of the United States District Court for the Southern District of California have developed the following presentations, which are designed to explain various aspects of the judicial system to students of all ages. Please contact our Community Outreach Liaison, Kathleen Walford, at community_outreach@casd.uscourts.gov to discuss the particular needs and interests of your group.

Primary Grades K-4	Elementary Grades 5	Jr. High/Middle School Grades 6-8	High School Grades 9-12	College/ Life-Long Learning
Classroom visits	Kids to Court Day (mock trials at court in April and May)	Court Works Program (8th grade) (mock trials at court in October)	Open Doors to the Court (mock trials at court in March)	Observation of Court Proceedings
Historical Walking Tour	Historical Walking Tour	The Judicial System in Action (video mock trial in classrooms)	Federal Jobs Panel	The Constitution in Action
U.S. Marshals presentation	U.S. Marshals presentation	U.S. Marshals presentation	CARE presentation	Historical Walking Tour
		Observation of Court Proceedings	Observation of Court Proceedings	Federal Jobs Panel
		The Constitution in Action	The Constitution in Action	CARE presentation

Classroom visits = Judge or attorney will come to your classroom to discuss the American system of justice with your students. This can include presiding over a mock trial scenario in the classroom.

Historical Walking Tour of the John Rhoades Federal Judicial Center = This self-guided tour through and around the federal judicial center illustrates over 100 years of history in the Southern District of California through the art and architecture of our three distinct courthouses.

U.S. Marshals presentation = Students will learn about the job of Deputy U.S. Marshals and may have an opportunity to see a holding cell and try on some law enforcement equipment. They may also have the opportunity to meet our explosives detecting canines and their handler and learn how these amazing dogs are trained and work.

Kids to Court = The court provides age-appropriate mock trials in which students take on all the roles and serve as the jury. A judge and/or attorneys will be present throughout the trial to assist the students and provide additional information about the judicial system. The U.S. Marshals' presentation and/or the self-guided Historical Walking Tour can be combined with the mock trials.

The Judicial System in Action = A judge or lawyer visits a classroom and presents a mock trial utilizing an interactive video in which all of the actors are middle-school aged. During the videotaped presentation, the judge or lawyer will explain important components of a trial and at the conclusion, the students will act as jurors and decide the guilt or innocence of two middle-school students accused of possession of marijuana with the intent to sell.

Court Works , Open Doors = The court provides age-appropriate mock trials in which students take on all the roles and serve as the jury. A judge and/or attorneys will be present throughout the trial to assist the students and provide additional information about the judicial system. The purpose of the mock trial is to familiarize students with the justice system while the subject matter of the mock trials provide cautionary tales on the ramifications of criminal activity. The mock trials can be combined with jobs panels, CARE or U.S. Marshals presentations.

Observation of Court Proceedings = Students are invited to watch actual court proceedings, usually a sentencing calendar, which will allow them the opportunity to hear from a prosecutor, defense attorney, the defendant and the judge. They will see the real life consequences of breaking the law. After about 1 hour of court observation, the students will be taken to a conference room to debrief and ask questions about what they observed. Court observation will be coupled with The Constitution in Action presentation.

The Constitution in Action = A judge or group of attorneys explain(s) how the Bill of Rights and other Constitutional Amendments are the basis for what happens in the federal courts everyday.

Federal Jobs Panel = Volunteers from the various agencies associated with the federal courts explain the details of their jobs and the education and training required to get those jobs. Members of various federal law enforcement agencies and MCC (the jail) may also be included in the panel to give students a global overview of the system.

CARE (Credit Abuse Resistance Education) Presentation = Members of the bankruptcy court bench and bar give interactive presentations to students on credit card abuse, payday loans, student loans and other topics important to good financial management skills.