

**Superior Court of California  
COUNTY OF  
SAN LUIS OBISPO**



Jacquelyn H. Duffy, Presiding Judge  
Michael Powell, Executive Officer

Courthouse Annex  
1035 Palm St., Rm 385  
San Luis Obispo, California 93408  
[www.slo.courts.ca.gov](http://www.slo.courts.ca.gov)

**For more information about this news  
release, please contact:**

Administrative Office  
805-706-3615

**Court COVID-19 Information:**

<https://www.slo.courts.ca.gov/general-information/announcements/covid-19-information>

## NEWS RELEASE

Monday, December 6, 2021

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA: The Superior Court of San Luis Obispo County launches new programs for landlord and tenants to help narrow the justice gap.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has created great hardship for tenants and landlords alike. As a result, federal, state, and municipal governments created rules and ordinances to help reduce the number of evictions that might result. In addition, rental assistance has been made available, at Housing Is Key (<https://housing.ca.gov>). Federal protections lapsed earlier, and California lifted many of its protections for tenants on October 1, 2021, while leaving in place some tenant protections that can be difficult to understand.

The San Luis Obispo County Superior Court is pleased to announce the launch of two new court programs that were created to assist local landlords and tenants navigate the complicated eviction process. The Sargent Shriver Civil Counsel Act originally created pilot programs that provided for the right to counsel, enhancement of self-help legal services and court efficiency in cases affecting basic human needs, like housing, and new funding from this source now allows the Court to expand the services it provides, in an attempt to bridge the justice gap. In addition to the new court programs, the San Luis Obispo Legal Assistance Foundation is also offering tenants and landlords a full range of legal resources, including full scope representation to income-eligible litigants. Both programs are free to self-represented litigants.

The first court program finds Matthew Kay as the new Self-Help Center attorney. He brings to this position several years of working on behalf of landlords and tenants in the non-profit sector. Mr. Kay helps both landlords and tenants by providing legal information related to filing and responding to eviction lawsuits. Since starting in September 2021, Mr. Kay has helped all the tenants who contacted the Self-Help Center to avoid a default, which prevents a tenant from having her day in court and can affect one's credit history and ability to rent an apartment in the future. Besides helping parties with evictions, Mr. Kay also assists individuals seeking guardianships and conservatorships.

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The second court program requires both parties in a contested eviction case to attend a Mandatory Settlement Conference with a neutral facilitator, called the Housing Settlement Master, before trial. Attorney Keira Cumberland has served in this role since April 19, 2021. She joins the program with several years of experience litigating eviction cases. Since starting in this position, Ms. Cumberland has successfully helped many parties find an amicable solution to their lawsuits. “It is rewarding to help people take control of their future, despite the difficult circumstances that involve their home. I am encouraged to see a positive trend of both parties working together.” Ms. Cumberland not only facilitates challenging conversations but also provides education on the process of eviction, alternatives to trial, and local resources including re-housing programs and rent relief.

To schedule an appointment with the Court’s Self-Help Center, please call (805)706-3617, or schedule online at <https://calendly.com/self-help-center>.

For more information about the services provided by the Court’s Self-Help Center, please visit the Self-Help Center’s website at <http://www.slo.courts.ca.gov/self-help>

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