

CALIFORNIA JUDGES BENCHGUIDES

**Benchguide 3**

**COURTROOM CONTROL:  
CONTEMPT AND SANCTIONS**

[REVISED 2010]



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE  
OF THE COURTS

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EDUCATION DIVISION/CENTER FOR  
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## **COURTROOM CONTROL: CONTEMPT AND SANCTIONS**

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## I. SCOPE AND USE OF BENCHGUIDE

### A. [§3.1] Scope of Benchguide

This benchguide provides a procedural overview of the judicial power to exercise courtroom control through the use of civil contempt proceedings under [CCP §§1209–1222](#). It also provides a procedural overview of the judicial power to impose monetary sanctions (1) under [CCP §§128.7](#) (violation of pleading certification requirements), [177.5](#) (violation of court order); (2) [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30](#) (violation of court rule); (3) in family law proceedings under [Fam C §§271 and 3027.1](#); and (4) under various sanctions provisions applicable in specific instances.

For a detailed substantive discussion of sanctions, see [CALIFORNIA JUDGES BENCHBOOK: CIVIL PROCEEDINGS—BEFORE TRIAL, SECOND EDITION](#) §§17.2–17.70 (Cal CJER 2008). For a detailed substantive discussion of contempt, including criminal contempt under [Pen C §166](#), which is discussed in this benchguide in [§3.24](#), see [CIVIL PROCEEDINGS](#) §§17.71–17.118.

Sanctions imposed under discovery statutes are not generally included in this benchguide. For a discussion of those sanctions, see [CALIFORNIA JUDGES BENCHBOOK: CIVIL PROCEEDINGS—DISCOVERY](#), chap 6 (Cal CJER 1994). On the judge’s authority to enforce a judgment under the court’s contempt power, see [CALIFORNIA JUDGES BENCHBOOK: CIVIL PROCEEDINGS—AFTER TRIAL](#) §§6.165–6.166 (Cal CJER 1998).

### B. [§3.2] How To Use Benchguide

The material in [§§3.3–3.19](#) is designed to provide quick access to the procedures for handling various contempt and monetary sanctions issues. The following is a suggested approach for using this benchguide to address conduct that may warrant a finding of contempt and/or imposition of sanctions:

(1) Is the conduct contemptuous? See [§§3.3–3.4](#).

(2) Which contempt procedure should be followed? For discussion of contempt and the shield law, see discussion in [§3.5](#). Classify the conduct as direct, indirect, or hybrid contempt by consulting [§3.6](#). Follow the appropriate procedural checklist in [§3.7](#) (direct contempt), [§3.8](#) (indirect contempt), or [§3.9](#) (hybrid contempt). For discussion of the applicable law, refer to [§§3.20–3.51](#), which are cross-referenced in the checklists.

(3) Use the appropriate contempt forms in [§§3.93–3.96](#).

(4) Should sanctions be imposed? Consider using sanctions as an alternative, or in addition, to contempt. For sanctions under [CCP §128.7](#), follow the sanctions procedure set out in the checklist in [§3.10](#). For discussion of the applicable law, refer to [§§3.52–3.62](#). For sanctions under [CCP §177.5](#) for violation of a lawful court order, follow the sanctions procedure set out in the checklist in [§3.11](#). For discussion of the applicable law, refer to [§§3.63–3.64](#). For checklists for imposing sanctions under other sanctions statutes, see [§§3.10–3.19](#).

## II. CONTEMPT PROCEDURE

### A. Contemptuous Acts

#### 1. [\[§3.3\]](#) Examples of Contemptuous Conduct

The following are examples of conduct considered to be contemptuous:

(1) *Conduct tending to disrupt a judicial proceeding.* See [CCP §1209\(a\)\(1\)–\(2\)](#) (disorderly, contemptuous, or insolent behavior; breach of peace; or causing a violent disturbance). This is a common ground for using the direct contempt power to control an attorney’s behavior during a trial or other court proceeding. An adjudication of contempt for misconduct during trial is commonly deferred until the conclusion of the trial. At that time, due process requires notice and hearing. But if an attorney persists in misconduct in argument despite admonishment, and if prompt punishment is imperative, the judge may find the attorney in direct contempt and treat the contempt summarily. See *McCann v Municipal Court* (1990) 221 CA3d 527, 536, 538, 270 CR 640; [§3.35](#). See also *Boysaw v Superior Court* (2000) 23 C4th 215, 219–220, 223, 96 CR2d 531 (judge had authority to summarily find defense counsel in contempt for counsel’s direct refusal to obey judge’s order not to continue arguing judge’s evidentiary ruling and for counsel’s rude, hostile, and disrespectful response to judge in front of jury); *Hanson v Superior Court* (2001) 91 CA4th 75, 84–85, 109 CR2d 782 (statement that attorney’s client had not received a fair trial was contemptuous on its face because it impugned trial judge’s integrity by suggesting he had failed in his duty to guarantee a fair trial); *People v Chong* (1999) 76 CA4th 232, 245, 90 CR2d 198 (throughout trial, defense counsel challenged judge’s authority in jury’s presence, made disparaging comments to judge and prosecutor, and violated judge’s rulings).

(2) *Disobeying a lawful court judgment, order, or process.* This is a frequent basis for an order to show cause regarding indirect contempt against a party or witness. [CCP §1209\(a\)\(5\)](#). See, e.g., *In re Riordan* (2002) 26 C4th 1235, 1237, 115 CR2d 1 and *In re Grayson* (1997) 15 C4th 792, 793–794, 64 CR2d 102 (violation of court’s order to file brief); *Ross v Superior Court* (1977) 19 C3d 899, 906, 141 CR 133 (violation of



injunction); *Trans-Action Commercial Investors, Ltd. v Firmaterr, Inc.* (1997) 60 CA4th 352, 371–372, 70 CR2d 449 (attorney’s repeated attempts to bring matters before jury that court had ruled were inadmissible).

(3) *Acts involving the court process or a court proceeding:*

- Abusing the process or proceeding. CCP §1209(a)(4).
- Falsely pretending to act under a court order or process. CCP §1209(a)(4).
- Unlawfully interfering with the process or proceedings. CCP §1209(a)(8). See *Raygoza v Betteravia Farms* (1987) 193 CA3d 1592, 1596, 239 CR 188 (voluntary settlement conference before retired judge does not involve court proceeding or process); *In re Holmes* (1983) 145 CA3d 934, 936, 941–944, 193 CR 790 (person who knowingly assists another in evading service of process commits contempt under CCP §1209(a)(8)).
- Misusing discovery process. See CCP §2023.030(e); *Lossing v Superior Court* (1989) 207 CA3d 635, 638–639, 255 CR 18 (contempt proceedings to sanction discovery abuse are ancillary proceedings without sufficient independence to support cause of action for malicious prosecution). See also *In re De La Parra* (1986) 184 CA3d 139, 144–145, 228 CR 864 (although court has statutory power to enforce civil discovery by contempt, this drastic sanction should rarely be used; imposing jail sentence to enforce civil discovery should be reserved for cases in which court’s dignity is truly compromised, and no other suitable penalty is available).

(4) *Certain acts of an “inferior” tribunal, magistrate, or officer (CCP §1209(a)(11)):*

- Disobeying a lawful superior court judgment, order, or process.
- Proceeding in an action or a special proceeding contrary to law after the action or proceeding has been removed from jurisdiction.

(5) *Attorney’s statements charging judicial dishonesty or misconduct:*

- Making an oral statement that the “court obviously does not want to apply the law.” *In re Buckley* (1973) 10 C3d 237, 250, 110 CR 121 (contemptuous charge of judicial dishonesty); see *People v Chong, supra*, 76 CA4th at 235–236 (accusing judge of being intellectually dishonest).
- Making false statements in an affidavit supporting a disqualification motion, accusing the judge of misconduct. *In re Ciraolo* (1969) 70 C2d 389, 394, 74 CR 865; *Fine v Superior Court* (2002) 97 CA4th 651, 665, 119 CR2d 376.

- Making false statements in an affidavit supporting a disqualification motion that the judge's hatred and dislike were so great that he would willfully make unlawful rulings against the affiant. *Lamberson v Superior Court* (1907) 151 C 458, 463, 91 P 100.
- Making statements that the client had not received a fair trial and that it was the prosecutor's job to misrepresent the facts. *Hanson v Superior Court, supra*, 91 CA4th at 84.

(6) *Attorney's statements or acts impugning the court's integrity:*

- Making the statement in an appellate brief that the appellate court fixed the appeal and conspired to defeat the appeal. *In re Koven* (2005) 134 CA4th 262, 272, 35 CR3d 917.
- Making an oral statement to opposing counsel that "you won before you started." See *Gillen v Municipal Court* (1940) 37 CA2d 428, 429, 99 P2d 555.
- Making unsupported statements in a brief intimating that judges may be improperly influenced in deciding an appeal. *In re Philbrook* (1895) 105 C 471, 474, 38 P 884.
- Making untruthful statements in correspondence with opposing counsel, calculated to create the false impression that Supreme Court justices were unduly intimate with powerful litigants. *In re Shay* (1911) 160 C 399, 407, 117 P 442.
- Accusing trial judge of bias in appellate brief without any foundation in the record. *In re S.C.* (2006) 138 CA4th 396, 423-424, 41 CR3d 453.

(7) *Attorney's absence from court without valid excuse.* This is the most common type of hybrid contempt. The following are examples (see §3.26):

- Failing to ascertain the new trial date after a continuance motion was handled by an associate. *In re Stanley* (1981) 114 CA3d 588, 592, 170 CR 755.
- Failing to appear for trial when representing a client for trial in a criminal case, requiring appointment of alternative counsel. *In re Baroldi* (1987) 189 CA3d 101, 109, 234 CR 286, disapproved on other grounds in 23 C4th 215, 221 (court avoided "hybrid" label; modified direct contempt procedure is adequate).
- Failing to appear for the resumption of a criminal trial. *Arthur v Superior Court* (1965) 62 C2d 404, 409, 42 CR 441 (attorney made no reasonable effort to prevent inevitable conflict and delay from unreasonable caseload, and left client unrepresented); *Lyons v*

*Superior Court* (1955) 43 C2d 755, 759, 278 P2d 681 (attorney failed to appear at announced hour for resumption of trial when he had ability to return).

- Departing from the courtroom unannounced and without authority during trial. *Vaughn v Municipal Court* (1967) 252 CA2d 348, 358, 60 CR 575.
- Failing to attend the pronouncement of judgment and sentencing of a client. *Chula v Superior Court* (1962) 57 C2d 199, 203, 18 CR 507.

(8) *Attorney's failure to comply with Judicial Council rules.* Cal Rules of Ct 2.30; *Cantillon v Superior Court* (1957) 150 CA2d 184, 187, 309 P2d 890; see discussion in §3.76.

(9) *Attorney's advice to client to disobey court-ordered discovery.* *In re Bongfeldt* (1971) 22 CA3d 465, 476, 99 CR 428 (client and attorney held in contempt).

(10) *Attorney's "rude, obnoxious, offensive, and insulting" comments.* *Boysaw v Superior Court*, *supra*, 23 C4th at 223 ("The Court: Don't argue, Mr. Boysaw". . . "Mr. Boysaw: I am arguing"); *McCann v Municipal Court*, *supra*, 221 CA3d at 540-541 (remarks such as "[I will] not move on until you haul me away," "You're not my mother," and "If you're going to try to convict my client, I'm going to react" were unnecessarily challenging to court, disruptive, and contemptuous).

(11) *Deceit and concealment that mislead a judge.* *Daily v Superior Court* (1935) 4 CA2d 127, 132, 40 P2d 936 (misleading temporary judge in execution of judgment proceedings).

(12) *Unlawfully detaining a witness or party.* See CCP §1209(a)(7).

(13) *Witness's disobedience of a subpoena or refusal to be sworn or to testify.* See CCP §§1209(a)(9), 1991; Pen C §§1331-1331.5; *In re D.W.* (2004) 123 CA4th 491, 500-501, 20 CR3d 274; *In re Keller* (1975) 49 CA3d 663, 666, 123 CR 223. The party requesting the witness's attendance must present to the court a declaration (or affidavit) showing the facts constituting the contempt and proof that the witness was properly served with a subpoena. See *Chapman v Superior Court* (1968) 261 CA2d 194, 197-198, 67 CR 842. A witness's absence from court could be handled as a hybrid contempt, while the refusal to testify would be direct contempt (see §3.96 for script). See also CCP §1219.5 (special contempt procedure for minor's refusal to testify); Cal Rules of Ct 3.383(c) (authorizing contempt proceeding under CCP §1991 against witness subpoenaed to testify in judicial arbitration proceeding who fails to appear). See §3.29 for discussion of civil-coercive proceedings.

(14) *Disregarding an order excluding prospective witnesses.* See CCP §1209(a)(5); Evid C §777; *People v Duane* (1942) 21 C2d 71, 80, 130 P2d 123. The court may exclude the witness's testimony, but only if

the party seeking to offer the testimony was “at fault” in causing the witness’s violation of the exclusion order. See *People v Adams* (1993) 19 CA4th 412, 436, 23 CR2d 512. See also Pen C §867; *People v Young* (1985) 175 CA3d 537, 542, 221 CR 32.

(15) *Interfering with a jury*. See CCP §1209(a)(8).

(16) *Certain acts by jurors or prospective jurors*:

- Failing to respond to a jury summons. CCP §1209(a)(10).
- Communicating with a party, or any other person, regarding the merits of an action, or receiving a communication from a party or other person regarding it, without immediate disclosure to the court. See CCP §1209(a)(10).

(17) *Ministerial officer’s misbehavior, willful neglect, or violation of duty*. See CCP §1209(a)(3) (term “ministerial officer” includes attorney, counsel, clerk, sheriff, coroner, or other person, appointed or elected to perform judicial or ministerial service). The following are examples:

- An attorney was held in contempt for violating his professional obligation to the court by failing to appear for oral argument without adequate justification or failing to notify the court he would not be appearing. *In re Aguilar* (2004) 34 C4th 386, 389–390, 18 CR3d 874.
- An attorney was held in contempt for intentionally making false statements to the court. 34 C4th at 394.
- Defense counsel was held in contempt for violating the duty not to mislead the judge or jury by making false statements of fact or law, when counsel argued to the jury that it was the goal of the defense and prosecution to misrepresent the facts. *Hanson v Superior Court, supra*, 91 CA4th at 85.

(18) *Noncompliance with child support order*. CCP §1209.5 (proof that the order was made, filed, and served on the parent or proof that the parent was present in court when the order was made, and proof of failure to comply with the order is prima facie evidence of contempt). See *Moss v Superior Court* (1998) 17 C4th 396, 425–426, 71 CR2d 215 (proof of ability to pay is not element of contempt based on failure to comply with child support order); *In re Ivey* (2000) 85 CA4th 793, 798–799, 102 CR2d 447 (inability to pay is affirmative defense to be raised by contemner, except when alleged contempt occurs many years after support order). A violation of a *family* support order is evidence of contempt under CCP §1209.5. *People v Dilday* (1993) 20 CA4th Supp 1, 3, 25 CR2d 386. A spousal support order is also enforceable by contempt (*Bradley v Superior Court* (1957) 48 C2d 509, 522, 310 P2d 634). See §3.50.

(19) *Improper motion for reconsideration*. Filing a motion for reconsideration that does not comply with the requirements of CCP §1008

may be punished as a contempt. [CCP §1008\(d\)](#) (sanctions under [CCP §128.7](#) may also be imposed).

(20) *Violating rule limiting media coverage.* Anyone who violates [Cal Rules of Ct 1.150\(c\)](#) by photographing, recording, or broadcasting a court proceeding without prior court approval may be cited for contempt or sanctioned. [Cal Rules of Ct 1.150\(f\)](#). Any unauthorized film or tape that the offender has made of the court proceedings may be confiscated. See *Marin Indep. Journal v Municipal Court* (1993) 12 CA4th 1712, 1721, 16 CR2d 550. Anyone who obtains an order permitting electronic coverage and then violates that order may be cited for contempt or sanctioned. [Cal Rules of Ct 1.150\(f\)](#). Some courts further penalize the offender by denying any [Rule 1.150](#) applications that the offender may submit for a period of time, the length of which depends on the seriousness of the violation.

## 2. [§3.4] Examples of Acts That Are Not Contemptuous

(1) *Attorney's appropriate objection or advocacy:*

- Disregarding a court's order to sit down or keep quiet when the attorney has not been afforded an opportunity for appropriate objection or other indicated advocacy. *Cooper v Superior Court* (1961) 55 C2d 291, 297, 10 CR 842 (court's order was not "lawful" under circumstances).
- Standing while cross-examining a witness. *Curran v Superior Court* (1925) 72 CA 258, 265, 236 P 975.
- Acting in good faith to protect a client's interest. See *Gallagher v Municipal Court* (1948) 31 C2d 784, 796, 192 P2d 905; *McMillan v Superior Court* (1979) 96 CA3d 608, 611-612, 158 CR 17 (defense attorney's request for brief continuance at conclusion of prosecution's case to discuss case further with defendant before putting defendant on stand; attorney's request was reasonable, and he was not insolent or disrespectful); *Chula v Superior Court* (1952) 109 CA2d 24, 40, 240 P2d 398 (honest mistake in interpreting law; attorney's views were presented to court in proper and respectful manner).
- Making proper objection to the court's remarks against using the word "guess." *Curran v Superior Court, supra*, 72 CA at 262 (attorney's language was inoffensive, brief, and direct).

(2) *Properly requesting disqualification of judge.* *Woolley v Superior Court* (1937) 19 CA2d 611, 628, 66 P2d 680 (affidavit did not show bad faith, and manner of its presentation was unobjectionable).

(3) *Attorney's inappropriate remarks made without contumacious (obstinately rebellious or insubordinate) intent.* An attorney may not be punished for making remarks that do not refer to judicial conduct or

violate a court ruling and that are made without a specific intent to act contumaciously. *In re Carrow* (1974) 40 CA3d 924, 927, 115 CR 601 (remark that “this trial is becoming a joke” was not contemptuous on its face; deliberate mention of penalty, contrary to judge’s ruling, in argument to jury was not made with specific intent to act contumaciously).

(4) *Attorney’s absence from court with valid excuse*. See *Mowrer v Superior Court* (1969) 3 CA3d 223, 232, 83 CR 125, 130 (public defender required to appear in another criminal department had valid excuse for being late).

(5) *Prospective juror’s giving flippant, impertinent, or unresponsive answers in an official questionnaire designed to elicit a person’s eligibility and availability for jury service*. See *Lister v Superior Court* (1979) 98 CA3d 64, 67, 159 CR 280 (questionnaire is not “order,” “process,” or “proceedings” of court under CCP §1209).

### 3. [§3.5] Contempt and Shield Law

A newsperson’s refusal to disclose unpublished information (or the source of information whether published or unpublished) obtained or prepared in gathering, receiving, or processing information for communication to the public may not be considered contempt because the refusal is protected by the “shield” law. Cal Const art I, §2(b); Evid C §1070; *Delaney v Superior Court* (1990) 50 C3d 785, 796–797, 268 CR 753. This “shield” law grants newspersons virtually absolute protection against compelled disclosure. *Miller v Superior Court* (1999) 21 C4th 883, 890–891, 89 CR2d 834. A newsperson gains immunity from contempt and the right to withhold unpublished information once he or she establishes the necessary foundation for invoking the shield law. *People v Vasco* (2005) 131 CA4th 137, 153, 31 CR3d 643; *Rancho Publications v Superior Court* (1999) 68 CA4th 1538, 1542, 1546–1547, 81 CR2d 274 (shield law may cover editorials, including paid “advertorials” under certain circumstances, but does not cover all paid advertisements).

The shield law is applicable to publications on an electronic Web site that appears regularly online. Such a Web site falls within the statutory protection of a “newspaper, magazine, or other periodical publication,” as a periodic publication. Such Web sites are highly analogous to printed publications: they consist predominantly of text on “pages” that the reader “opens,” reads at his or her own pace, and “closes.” They are also published periodically. *O’Grady v Superior Court* (2006) 139 CA4th 1423, 1461–1464, 44 CR3d 72.

A newsperson’s immunity from contempt is not qualified such that it can be overcome by a showing of need for unpublished information within the scope of the shield law. *New York Times Co. v Superior Court* (1990) 51 C3d 453, 461, 273 CR 98. In civil cases, the shield law provides “the highest possible level of protection” from disclosure of information sought

by litigants. *Playboy Enters., Inc. v Superior Court* (1984) 154 CA3d 14, 27-28, 201 CR 207.

A prosecutor's assertion of the people's right to due process of law under Cal Const art I, §29, cannot serve as a justification for holding a newsperson in contempt for refusing to surrender unpublished information. *Miller v Superior Court, supra*, 21 C4th at 892-901. But a criminal defendant's federal constitutional right to a fair trial may overcome a newsperson's claim of immunity from contempt under the shield law. *Delaney v Superior Court, supra*, 50 C3d at 793, 805, 820.

To compel a newsperson to disclose information covered by the shield law or face contempt, the defendant must make a threshold showing of a reasonable possibility that the information will materially assist in his or her defense; this showing need not be detailed or specific but must be more than mere speculation. If this threshold showing is made, the court must balance various factors, including whether the information is confidential or sensitive, what interests the shield law protects, the importance of the information to the defendant, and whether there is an alternative source for the information. *People v Ramos* (2004) 34 C4th 494, 526, 21 CR3d 575. See *Fost v Superior Court* (2000) 80 CA4th 724, 732-733, 95 CR2d 620 (if defendant makes sufficient showing, newsperson may be held in contempt of court for refusing to respond to proper cross-examination seeking information that would otherwise be protected by shield law); *In re Willon* (1996) 47 CA4th 1080, 1093, 55 CR2d 245 (judgment of contempt against newsperson who refused to disclose identity of person who provided information about pending criminal prosecution in violation of gag order was annulled; defendant did not request information that would directly assist in defense; instead, court sought disclosure to preserve its ability to control judicial process and maintain unbiased jury pool).

The shield law's protection is not contingent on a showing that a newsperson's unpublished information was obtained in confidence. *Delaney v Superior Court, supra*, 50 C3d at 805.

The shield law is not a privilege and only provides immunity from contempt. A newsperson is not entitled to seek relief until he or she has been adjudged in contempt. 50 C3d at 797, 805-806. See *New York Times Co. v Superior Court, supra*, 51 C3d at 460 (newsperson's petition for extraordinary relief is premature until judgment of contempt has been entered); *SCI-Sacramento, Inc. v Superior Court* (1997) 54 CA4th 654, 662, 665-667, 62 CR2d 868 (newspaper did not waive rights under shield law by submitting videotape for in camera review; parties should be encouraged to allow disputed materials to be examined by court in camera because court's review may resolve matter expeditiously and short of a contempt adjudication).

To avoid confinement under a judgment of contempt that may later be set aside, a judge should stay the judgment to allow the newsperson sufficient time to seek writ relief if the judge believes there is any colorable argument the newsperson can make against the contempt adjudication. *New York Times Co. v Superior Court*, *supra*, 51 C3d at 460.

The shield law does not preclude statutory sanctions against a newsperson other than contempt (at least in civil actions). *Rancho Publications v Superior Court*, *supra*, 68 CA4th at 1543; *In re Willon*, *supra*, 47 CA4th at 1091. Thus, for example, monetary sanctions under CCP §1992 may be imposed against a newsperson for disobeying a subpoena to disclose unpublished information. *New York Times Co. v Superior Court*, *supra*, 51 C3d at 462–464 (noting limited effect of this remedy that must be sought in an independent civil action).

### B. [§3.6] Classifying Civil Contempt

Classifying contempt as direct, indirect, or hybrid is done by determining where the act was committed (see §3.26 for discussion):

- *Direct contempt* is committed in the immediate view and presence of the court or of a judge in chambers. CCP §1211(a). A common example is an attorney’s disruptive conduct or statements during a court proceeding. For a procedural checklist, see §3.7. Another example is a contemptuous statement in a document filed with the court. See *In re Koven* (2005) 134 CA4th 262, 271, 35 CR3d 917. See also Rothman, California Judicial Conduct Handbook, Appendix E: Direct Contempt Checklist (3d ed CJA/Thomson West 2007).
- *Indirect contempt* is not committed in the immediate view and presence of the court or of a judge in chambers. See CCP §§1211–1217; *Arthur v Superior Court* (1965) 62 C2d 404, 407, 408, 42 CR 441; *In re Marcus* (2006) 138 CA4th 1009, 1014, 41 CR3d 861; *Hanson v Superior Court* (2001) 91 CA4th 75, 81, 109 CR2d 782. A common example is a party’s refusal to obey a court order. See CCP §1209(a)(5). For a procedural checklist, see §3.8.
- *Hybrid contempt* is committed in the court’s presence, but the conduct may be excused by matters that occurred outside the courtroom. The most common example is an absent or a late attorney, who may be able to show a valid excuse. See, e.g., *Arthur v Superior Court*, *supra*, 62 C2d at 407; *In re Baroldi* (1987) 189 CA3d 101, 111, 234 CR 286, disapproved on other grounds in 23 C4th 215, 221. For a procedural checklist, see §3.9.



### C. [§3.7] Checklist: Direct Contempt Procedure

(1) *Determine whether the direct contempt procedure is appropriate, i.e., whether the act was committed in the immediate view and presence of the court or of the judge in chambers.* CCP §1211(a). For a late or absent attorney, use the hybrid contempt procedure in §3.9. For a checklist on classifying contempt, see §3.6. For discussion, see §3.26.

(2) *Consider filing a statement of recusal if there is personal embroilment.* Consider recusal when immediate action against the contempt was not taken and the judge's involvement is personal rather than for the protection of the fair trial process. See *Hawk v Superior Court* (1974) 42 CA3d 108, 133, 116 CR 713. For discussion, see §3.36.

(3) *Determine proper judicial response to the conduct.* Analyze the offensiveness of the conduct and determine the appropriate response. Use the examples of contemptuous acts in §§3.3–3.4 to help determine whether the conduct constitutes contempt.

- *Declare a short recess to reflect in chambers about an appropriate response or to calm down if angry.* See *In re Grossman* (1972) 24 CA3d 624, 628, 101 CR 176.
- *Consider contacting county counsel for assistance.*
- *Consider whether the alleged contemner was previously warned about similar conduct.* See discussion in §3.34.
- *Consider ordering sanctions as an alternative to contempt in certain cases, using the appropriate procedure.* See §§3.10–3.19, 3.52–3.75.
- *Reflect on contemplated actions carefully before deciding to cite for contempt.* See §3.33 for discussion of the cautious exercise of direct contempt power.

➡ **JUDICIAL TIP:** Many judges believe that they should exercise contempt power as a last resort. Experienced judges rarely, if ever, use contempt to control their courtrooms. Rothman, California Judicial Conduct Handbook, §§4.01 et seq (3d ed CJA/Thomson West 2007).

(4) *Give a warning.* Warn the accused that further similar conduct will result in a contempt citation. A contempt order that is based on the tone of voice used by the alleged contemner must recite that he or she was warned the tone of voice was objectionable. *Boysaw v Superior Court* (2000) 23 C4th 215, 222–223, 96 CR2d 531. Unless the conduct is outrageous and immediately recognizable as an act of contempt, the judge must warn the person that further similar conduct will result in a citation for contempt. 23 C4th at 222. This warning must be made on the record

and must be recited in the order. 23 C4th at 222–223. For discussion, see §3.34.

(5) *Cite for contempt immediately, and make a proper record as follows:*

- *Recite that the alleged contemner was warned about the offensive conduct.* See 23 C4th at 222–223.
- *Recite in detail the act of contempt, including the actual contemptuous language used or conduct observed.* See CCP §1211(a).
- *Recite that the act occurred in the immediate view and presence of the court.* See CCP §1211(a). For discussion, see §3.26.

(6) *Adjudicate the contempt immediately if prompt punishment is imperative.* On the importance of timing of adjudication, see §3.35.

- *Give the alleged contemner an opportunity to offer any defense or mitigating circumstances, or to apologize on the record.* See §3.37.
- *Weigh the effects of an apology or other mitigating circumstances.* See §3.37.
- *Immediately determine whether the accused is guilty.* For discussion of burden of proof, see §3.25.

(7) *Impose punishment.* Determine the punishment immediately, limited as follows:

- *Impose a fine not exceeding \$1000 or imprisonment not exceeding five days, or both, to punish the contemner, as well as reasonable attorneys' fees and costs, if appropriate (see CCP §1218(a); §3.28 for discussion); or*
- *Coerce compliance with an order by imprisoning the contemner until performance of an act he or she has the power to perform.* See CCP §1219(a). The “coercive” imprisonment must end when the contemner no longer has the power to comply. For discussion, see §3.30. For a spoken form for use in the coercive imprisonment of a witness for refusal to answer questions, see §3.96.

➤ **JUDICIAL TIP:** In a “coercion” situation, some judges set a telephone appearance at a later time so that the contemner may communicate a possible change of mind. Other judges require the contemner to be transported to court periodically for a face-to-face meeting to determine if he or she has had a change of heart regarding compliance with the court’s order.

(8) *Consider staying execution of the sentence until the end of the trial or pending appellate review.* Practical considerations almost always favor granting a stay, and a stay is required for attorneys and certain others

in most situations. See [CCP §§128\(b\), 1209\(c\)](#). For discussion, see [§§3.38–3.39](#).

(9) *Enter judgment immediately.* Promptly prepare and enter a written order as follows (see [CCP §1211\(a\)](#)):

- *Describe the facts as occurring in the court’s immediate view and presence.*
- *Indicate whether a warning was given.*
- *State the effect of any mitigating circumstances or apology.*
- *Adjudge the accused guilty of contempt.* For discussion of burden of proof, see [§3.25](#).
- *Prescribe the punishment and stay execution.* For discussion of judgment requirements, see [§§ 3.40–3.42](#). For a sample form, see [§3.95](#).

☛ **JUDICIAL TIP:** The contempt order should be prepared very carefully by, or under the direction of, the court. Once the order is final and conclusive, it cannot be amended for any reason, and an appellate court cannot remand and reinstitute contempt proceedings if the order is declared void because of a defect. In such an instance, the contemner must be released. See *In re Baroldi* (1987) 189 CA3d 101, 111, 234 CR 286, disapproved on other grounds in 23 C4th 215, 221; *Bloom v Superior Court* (1986) 185 CA3d 409, 412, 229 CR 747. Another reason to carefully prepare the order is that the failure to prepare a complete written order may be a basis for judicial discipline. See Rothman, California Judicial Conduct Handbook, §4.38 (3d ed CJA/Thomson West 2007). Although it may not be practical for the court to prepare a written contempt order the instant it orally pronounces its finding, the court must prepare a written order “expeditiously.” *In re Easterbrook* (1988) 200 CA3d 1541, 1544, 244 CR 652.

- *Report final contempt order to the State Bar, as appropriate.* See [§3.42](#).

#### D. [§3.8] Checklist: Indirect Contempt Procedure

(1) *Consider preliminary determinations:*

- *Are there grounds for disqualification under [CCP §§170–170.6](#) and *Briggs v Superior Court* (1931) 211 C 619, 629, 297 P 3?* For discussion, see [CALIFORNIA JUDGES BENCHBOOK: CIVIL PROCEEDINGS—BEFORE TRIAL, SECOND EDITION](#), chap 7 (Cal

CJER 2008); California Judges Benchguide 2: *Disqualification of Judge* (Cal CJER).

- *Are sanctions an appropriate alternative?* Consider ordering sanctions as an alternative to contempt in certain cases. See §§3.10–3.19, 3.52–3.92.

(2) *Determine whether the indirect contempt procedure is appropriate.* The judge should determine whether the act was committed outside the court's or judge's presence, such as disobedience of a lawful court order. See CCP §§1209(a)(5), 1211(a). For a late or absent attorney, use the hybrid contempt procedure (a modified form of direct contempt) discussed in §3.9. For classifying contempt, see §3.6; for discussion, see §3.94.

(3) *Determine whether the proceeding has been properly initiated.* An attorney, a party, a judicial officer, or other person initiates an indirect contempt proceeding by filing an affidavit, declaration, or statement of facts of the contempt. CCP §1211(a); *Moss v Superior Court* (1998) 17 C4th 396, 401 n1, 71 CR2d 215. See discussion in §§3.43–3.45. Filing of the Judicial Council form Order to Show Cause and Affidavit for Contempt (FL-410) constitutes compliance with the requirement of CCP §1211(a). CCP §1211(b). For a sample form of a statement of facts by a commissioner or referee, see §3.94

(4) *Issue an order to show cause.* The court issues an order to show cause on receiving the affidavit, declaration, or statement of facts (see §3.46). For a sample form of order to show cause, see §3.93.

(5) *Confirm that the order to show cause has been served.* The order to show cause must be served on the alleged contemner in the same manner as a summons. See CCP §1016; for discussion, see §3.47.

(6) *Determine if a warrant of attachment or bench warrant is needed:*

- *Issue the warrant if the alleged contemner or his or her attorney fails to appear in response to the order to show cause.* See CCP §1212; *In re Morelli* (1970) 11 CA3d 819, 835, 91 CR 72. For discussion, see §3.46.
- *Endorse on the warrant a direction that the person charged may be released by posting a specified bail.* See CCP §1213.

(7) *Hold a full and fair hearing.* The hearing must satisfy due process requirements as follows (see CCP §1217; 11 CA3d at 835):

- *Advise the accused of his or her rights, which are the same as those of a defendant in a criminal case, except there is no right to jury trial unless the punishment is imprisonment for more than six months.* See §3.25.
- *Allow the accused to appear in person or by counsel only.*

- *Hear oral and documentary evidence.* See [CCP §1217](#); for discussion, see [§3.48](#).
- *Permit the accused to confront and cross-examine witnesses.* See [CCP §1217](#); for discussion, see [§3.48](#).

(8) *Adjudicate the contempt.* Find the accused's knowledge of the order, ability to comply, and willful disobedience before convicting for willful failure to comply with a court order. See [§3.49](#).

- *Weigh the effects of an apology or other mitigating circumstances.* See [§3.37](#).
- *Immediately determine whether the accused is guilty.* For discussion of burden of proof, see [§3.25](#).

(9) *Impose punishment and consider a stay of execution.* Follow the instructions in items (7) and (8) of the direct contempt procedure checklist in [§3.7](#).

(10) *Enter an order immediately.* Promptly prepare (or direct counsel to prepare) and enter a written order (see [CCP §1218](#); discussion in [§3.49](#); sample form in [§3.95](#)) as follows:

- *Describe the specific conduct justifying indirect contempt.* The order must recite the specific facts giving rise to the contempt. *In re De La Parra* (1986) 184 CA3d 139, 144, 228 CR 864.
- *State the effect of any mitigating circumstances or apology.*
- *Adjudge the accused guilty of contempt.* For discussion of burden of proof, see [§3.25](#).
- *Prescribe the punishment.* The court should consider reserving or suspending punishment to permit a contemner who has the ability to comply to do so. See *Warner v Superior Court* (1954) 126 CA2d 821, 827, 273 P2d 89 (long established practice of county to fix time within which payment must be made and not to send delinquent contemner immediately to jail).
- *For contempt for willful disobedience of a court's order (see [CCP §1209\(a\)\(5\)](#)), include facts establishing the court's jurisdiction to make the disobeyed order and the contemner's knowledge of the order, ability to comply, and willful disobedience.* See *In re Cassil* (1995) 37 CA4th 1081, 1086-1088, 44 CR2d 267. The order must be in writing or entered in the court minutes; an oral order that has not been reduced to writing or entered in the minutes is insufficient to support an adjudication of contempt. *In re Marcus* (2006) 138 CA4th 1009, 1015-1016, 41 CR3d 861; *Ketscher v Superior Court* (1970) 9 CA3d 601, 604-605, 88 CR 357. The order must also be "definitive"; otherwise, it lacks the certainty required to punish in a proceeding that is regarded as criminal or quasicriminal. 9 CA3d at

603–605 (judge’s order that “if either party attacks the other, I will consider this to be contempt of court and I will punish accordingly,” was not definitive, but was couched in language reasonably susceptible to interpretation that judge was merely warning parties as to what he intended to do in future if there was any trouble). For discussion, see §3.49.

- *Report final contempt order to the State Bar, as appropriate.* See §3.42.

### E. [§3.9] Checklist: Hybrid Contempt Procedure

(1) *Determine whether the hybrid contempt procedure is appropriate.* The judge should determine whether the accused may rely on outside circumstances to establish an excuse. *Arthur v Superior Court* (1965) 62 C2d 404, 409, 42 CR 441; *In re Baroldi* (1987) 189 CA3d 101, 106, 234 CR 286, disapproved on other grounds in 23 C4th 215, 221 (court declined to characterize contempt as “hybrid” but approved of this modified direct contempt procedure). For discussion, see §3.26.

(2) *Consider filing a statement of recusal if there is personal embroilment.* Consider recusal when immediate action against the contempt was not taken and the judge’s involvement is personal rather than for the protection of the fair trial process. See *Hawk v Superior Court* (1974) 42 CA3d 108, 133, 116 CR 713. For discussion, see §3.36.

(3) *Determine proper judicial response to the conduct.* Consider the factors specified in item (3) of the direct contempt procedure checklist in §3.7.

(4) *Cite for contempt immediately on the record.* Follow the steps in item (5) of the direct contempt checklist in §3.7.

(5) *Notify the accused of the citation.* The court’s notice may consist of informing the accused orally when he or she reappears in court or issuing an order to show cause regarding the contempt. *Arthur v Superior Court, supra*, 62 C2d at 409. See CCP §1211(a). For discussion, see §§3.46–3.47; for a sample form of order to show cause, see §3.93.

(6) *Adjudicate the contempt.* When the accused appears in response to the court’s notice, adjudicate the contempt as follows:

- *Confront the accused with the charge and give a reasonable opportunity to present a valid excuse for the conduct, including adequate time to procure witnesses in defense.* See *Inniss v Municipal Court* (1965) 62 C2d 487, 490, 42 CR 594 (opportunity denied; contempt order annulled); *In re Baroldi, supra*, 189 CA3d at 106, 111, disapproved on other grounds in 23 C4th 215, 221 (contempt not characterized as hybrid, but appellate court applied comparable criteria in declaring contempt order void).

- *Continue the matter if a delay is necessary to allow the accused a reasonable opportunity to gather evidence and procure witnesses to establish an excuse. Arthur v Superior Court, supra, 62 C2d at 409.*
- *Consider whether the accused has presented a legitimate excuse for the contempt. For discussion, see §3.37.*
- *Immediately determine whether the accused is guilty. For discussion of burden of proof, see §3.25.*

(7) *Impose punishment, consider a stay of execution, and prepare a written order:*

- *Follow steps (7) to (9) of the direct contempt procedure checklist in §3.7.*
- *Recite in the order that the contemner was afforded a reasonable opportunity to be heard regarding the reasons for his or her act, and either no excuse was offered or the court found the offered excuse to be insufficient. See Inniss v Municipal Court, supra, 62 C2d at 490; for a sample form, see §3.95.*
- *Report final contempt order to the State Bar, as appropriate. See §3.42.*

### III. SANCTIONS PROCEDURE

#### A. [§3.10] Checklist: Sanctions Procedure Under CCP §128.7

Code of Civil Procedure §128.7 states that when an attorney or underrepresented party files a paper in court, he or she is making representations to the court that certain conditions have been met, and it provides for sanctions if there are any violations. The law applicable to CCP §128.7 sanctions is discussed in §3.55.

(1) *Consider a party's request for sanctions or initiate a proceeding for sanctions on the court's own motion (CCP §128.7(c)) if an attorney or party has presented a paper to the court without making reasonable inquiry before certifying that to the best of that person's knowledge, information, and belief, all of the following conditions are true (CCP §128.7(b)):*

- The paper is not being presented primarily for an improper purpose, such as harassment or delay;
- The legal contentions are warranted by existing law or by nonfrivolous argument for modification of existing law;
- Factual allegations are warranted by the evidence or are likely to have evidentiary support after investigation; and

- The denial of factual allegations is warranted by the evidence or is reasonably based on lack of information or belief.

See discussion in §§3.52–3.62.

*Note:* Sanctions must be requested in a separate motion. CCP §128.7(c)(1).

(2) *Determine whether there was adequate notice and an opportunity to withdraw or correct the challenged paper.* CCP §128.7(c). A motion for sanctions under CCP §128.7 cannot generally be filed until 21 days after it has been served. During this 21-day “safe harbor” period, the party being served has the opportunity to correct the violation, and if it does so, the sanctions motion cannot be filed or pursued. CCP §128.7(c)(1) (court may shorten or extend this 21-day period). Because CCP §1005(b) requires motions to be filed at least 16 court days before the hearing, a motion for sanctions must be served at least 43 days before it will be heard (21 days prescribed by CCP §128.7(c)(1), plus 16 court days, plus 6 intervening weekend days). This notice period may be shortened by the court. See CCP §1005(b). This 43-day period is further extended under CCP §1005(b) when the notice of motion is served by mail. *Cromwell v Cummings* (1998) 65 CA4th Supp 10, 13 n3, 76 CR2d 171. Constitutional principles of due process require the notice of motion to identify the persons against whom monetary sanctions are sought. 65 CA4th Supp at 13.

*Note:* The opportunity to withdraw or correct challenged papers is a safe harbor provision that permits an offending party to avoid sanctions by withdrawing or correcting the papers. A party may not bring a motion for sanctions, unless there is some action the offending party may take to withdraw the improper pleading. *Malovec v Hamrell* (1999) 70 CA4th 434, 441, 82 CR2d 712.

(3) *If imposing sanctions on the court’s own motion, enter an order describing the sanctionable conduct and directing the attorneys or parties to show cause why they have not violated CCP §128.7(b), unless, within 21 days of service of the order to show cause, the challenged paper is withdrawn or corrected.* CCP §128.7(c)(2).

*Note:* Safe harbor limitations also apply to court-initiated sanctions, so that sanctions may not be imposed if the party has no action to take to withdraw or correct the improper pleading or paper. *Malovec v Hamrell, supra*, 70 CA4th at 441.

(4) *Conduct a hearing to consider imposing sanctions.* CCP §128.7(c) (court may impose sanction only after notice and an opportunity to respond).



(5) *Determine the type and amount of sanctions.* CCP §128.7(d) (court must consider whether party seeking sanctions exercised due diligence). Sanctions must be limited to that which is sufficient to deter repetition of this or comparable conduct by others. CCP §128.7(c). Sanctions may include an order to pay (CCP §128.7(d)):

- A penalty into court; and
- Some or all of the reasonable expenses and attorneys' fees incurred by the moving party as a result of the sanctionable conduct if sought on motion and warranted for purpose of deterrence.

Monetary sanctions may not be awarded:

- Against a represented party for unwarranted legal contentions (CCP §128.7(d)(1)); or
- For an award based on the court's own motion unless the court issues its order to show cause before a voluntary dismissal or settlement (CCP §128.7(d)(2)).

(6) *Prepare, or direct counsel to prepare, a written order.* See CCP §128.7(e) (court must describe the sanctionable conduct and explain the basis for the imposition of sanctions; there is no statutory requirement that the order be written or that an order denying sanctions be explained).

- **JUDICIAL TIP:** Best practice is to issue a written order and not to state mere conclusions in the words of the statute. Give a factual recital, with reasonable specificity, of the circumstances leading to the order. If desired, incorporate by reference portions of a party's papers that adequately set forth the conduct, circumstances, and legal arguments providing the bases for the court's conclusions. It may be advisable to attach a transcript of the hearing, if available.

(7) *Notify the State Bar if sanctions against an attorney are \$1000 or greater.* See Bus & P C §6086.7(c) (excludes discovery sanctions).

## **B. Checklists: Other Sanctions Alternatives**

### **1. [§3.11] Checklist: Violation of Lawful Court Order Under CCP §177.5**

(1) *Consider a party's request or initiate sanction proceedings on court's own motion for violation of a lawful court order by a person, done without good cause or substantial justification. This power does not apply to advocacy of counsel before the court.* For the purposes of this section, the term "person" includes a witness, a party, a party's attorney, or both. CCP §177.5.

The law applicable to CCP §177.5 sanctions is discussed in §3.63:

- In moving or opposing papers, a party may request sanctions, payable to the court, against a witness, a party, a party's attorney, or both a party and a party's attorney.
  - The court may impose sanctions on its own motion, following the procedure specified below.
  - Sanctions under [CCP §177.5](#) may be ordered in both civil and criminal cases. See [§3.63](#).
- ☛ JUDICIAL TIP: Consider [CCP §177.5](#) sanctions in addition, or as an alternative, to contempt for violation of a court order. Because the indirect contempt procedure is cumbersome, it may be easier to impose sanctions under [CCP §177.5](#) for the same conduct, following the procedure in this checklist. The judge may also consider imposing sanctions under [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30](#) for violation of a Judicial Council rule. See [§3.76](#).

(2) *Determine whether the party or court gave adequate notice and an opportunity to be heard.* Sanctions may not be imposed except on notice contained in a party's moving or responding papers, or on the court's own motion, after notice and opportunity to be heard. [CCP §177.5](#).

Adequate notice is also mandated by the due process clauses of the federal and state constitutions. *Sole Energy Co. v Hodges* (2005) 128 CA4th 199, 207, 26 CR3d 823; *Marriage of Reese & Guy* (1999) 73 CA4th 1214, 1220, 87 CR2d 339.

(3) *Determine whether there are substantive grounds for imposing sanctions.*

- A judicial officer may impose sanctions for any violation of a lawful court order without good cause or substantial justification. [CCP §177.5](#).
- This sanction power does not apply to advocacy of counsel before the court. [CCP §177.5](#).

(4) *Determine the amount of sanctions.* Order reasonable money sanctions, not to exceed \$1500, payable to the court. [CCP §177.5](#).

(5) *Prepare, or direct counsel to prepare, and enter a written order.*

- An order imposing sanctions must be in writing and must recite in detail the conduct or circumstances justifying the order. [CCP §177.5](#).
- Do not state mere conclusions in the words of the statute. Give a factual recital, with reasonable specificity, of the circumstances leading to the order.

- If desired, incorporate by reference portions of a party's papers that adequately set forth the conduct, circumstances, and legal arguments providing the bases for the court's conclusions.

(6) *Notify the State Bar if sanctions against an attorney are \$1000 or greater.* See [Bus & P C §6086.7\(c\)](#) (excludes discovery sanctions).

## 2. [§3.12] Checklist: Expenses Under CCP §396b(b) in Challenging Attorney's Selection of Venue

(1) *Consider a party's request or initiate sanctions on court's own motion (CCP §396b(b)); for discussion, see §§3.65–3.66):*

- A party may request reasonable expenses and attorneys' fees in papers seeking or opposing an order transferring an action to the proper court.
- The court may order payment of expenses on its own noticed motion, following the procedure specified below.

(2) *Determine whether the party or court gave adequate notice and an opportunity to be heard.* Sanctions may not be imposed except on notice contained in a party's moving or responding papers, or on the court's own motion, after notice and opportunity to be heard. [CCP §396b\(b\)](#).

(3) *Determine whether there are substantive grounds for imposing expenses.* In its discretion, the court may order payment to the prevailing party on the motion to transfer, regardless of whether the party is entitled to recover the costs of the action. In determining whether to order expenses and fees, the court must consider the following ([CCP §396b\(b\)](#)):

- Was an offer to stipulate to a change of venue reasonably made and rejected, and
- Was the motion or selection of venue made in good faith given the facts and law the moving or selecting party knew or should have known?

(4) *Determine the amount of expenses and fees to be paid by the attorney (CCP §396b(b)):*

- Award reasonable expenses and attorneys' fees incurred in making or resisting the motion to transfer.
- As between a party and his or her attorney, expenses and fees are the personal liability of the attorney and not chargeable to the party.

(5) *Prepare, or direct counsel to prepare, and enter a written order.* The statute does not specify formal order requirements.

- ✦ **JUDICIAL TIP:** Best practice is to issue a written order and to avoid conclusions in the words of the statute. Give a factual recital, with reasonable specificity, of the circumstances leading to the order. If desired, incorporate by reference portions of a party's papers that adequately set forth the conduct, circumstances, and legal arguments providing the bases for the court's conclusions.

(6) *Notify the State Bar if sanctions against an attorney are \$1000 or greater.* See [Bus & P C §6086.7\(c\)](#) (excludes discovery sanctions).

### 3. [§3.13] Checklist: Defense Costs Under CCP §1038 in Bad-Faith Tort Claim Proceeding

(1) *Determine whether a motion by a defendant or cross-defendant is properly before the court.*

- The motion for defense costs may be made in any civil proceeding under the [California Tort Claims Act](#) ([Govt C §§900–935.7](#)) or for indemnity or contribution in any civil action. [CCP §1038\(a\)](#). For discussion, see [§3.67](#).
- The motion must be made before discharge of the jury or entry of judgment ([CCP §1038\(c\)](#)), and costs are available only when a defendant's or cross-defendant's motion for summary judgment, judgment under [CCP §631.8](#), directed verdict, or nonsuit in the underlying proceeding is granted. See [CCP §1038\(d\)](#).
- The moving party must give notice of a request for defense costs in his or her papers. See [CCP §1038\(a\)](#).

- ✦ **JUDICIAL TIP:** The court may not impose expenses on its own motion under [CCP §1038](#), unlike the other monetary sanctions provisions in [CCP §§128.7, 177.5, 396b\(b\), and 437c\(j\)](#). The defense costs motion may be made only by the defendant or cross-defendant in connection with a motion for specified dispositive relief before discharge of the jury or judgment. See [CCP §1038\(a\), \(d\)](#).

(2) *Give the parties an opportunity to be heard.* [CCP §1038\(a\)](#). No award of defense costs may be made without notice and an opportunity to be heard.

(3) *Use the following two-step process, required by [CCP §1038\(a\)](#), to consider the motion (see discussion in [§3.67](#)):*

- *First, determine whether the proceeding was brought, and subsequently maintained, with reasonable cause and in the good-faith belief that there was a justifiable controversy under the facts and law.* Make this determination at the time of granting the

defendant's or cross-defendant's motion for summary judgment, judgment under CCP §631.8, directed verdict, or nonsuit. See CCP §1038(a), (d); *Curtis v County of Los Angeles* (1985) 172 CA3d 1243, 1252, 218 CR 772 (word "brought" encompasses continued maintenance).

- *Second, on determining that the proceeding was not brought in good faith and with reasonable cause, decide the amount of defense costs reasonably and necessarily incurred by the defendant or cross-defendant in opposing the proceeding.*

☛ JUDICIAL TIP: The two-step process set out above is mandatory on a proper motion by defendant or cross-defendant, as outlined in item (1). The court must determine and award defense costs if it finds that the underlying proceeding was not brought in good faith or with reasonable cause. CCP §1038(a).

(4) *Prepare, or direct counsel to prepare, and enter a written order awarding the costs:*

- Award the defense costs reasonably and necessarily incurred in opposing the proceeding, in addition to the costs normally awarded to the prevailing party. CCP §1038(a).
- Defense costs include reasonable attorneys' fees, expert witness fees, the expense of services of experts, advisers, and consultants in defense of the proceeding, when reasonably and necessarily incurred in defending the proceeding. CCP §1038(b).
- The statute does not specify formal order requirements.

☛ JUDICIAL TIP: Best practice is to issue a written order and to avoid conclusions in the words of the statute. Give a factual recital, with reasonable specificity, of the circumstances leading to the order. If desired, incorporate by reference portions of a party's papers that adequately set forth the conduct, circumstances, and legal arguments providing the bases for the court's conclusions.

(5) *Notify the State Bar if sanctions against an attorney are \$1000 or greater. See Bus & P C §6086.7(c) (excludes discovery sanctions).*

#### 4. [§3.14] Checklist: Expenses Under CCP §437c(j) for Bad-Faith Summary Judgment Affidavits

(1) *Consider a party's request or initiate on court's own motion (CCP §437c(j)):*

- A party may request expenses in papers seeking or opposing summary judgment or summary adjudication of issues if affidavits

(or declarations under [CCP §2015.5](#)) are presented by the opposing party in bad faith or solely for purposes of delay.

- The court may order payment of expenses on its own noticed motion, following the procedure specified below.

For the applicable law, see [§3.69](#).

(2) *Determine whether the party or court gave adequate notice and an opportunity to be heard.* Sanctions may not be imposed except on notice contained in a party's moving or responding papers, or on the court's own motion, after notice and opportunity to be heard. [CCP §437c\(j\)](#).

(3) *Determine whether there are substantive grounds for imposing expenses.*

- Determine whether any of the affidavits were presented in bad faith or solely for purposes of delay. The court must find several elements to hold an action frivolous or in bad faith: (1) The action must be determined to be without merit; (2) the action is prosecuted for an improper motive, including harassment or delay; or (3) the action indisputably has no merit, when any reasonable attorney would agree that the action is totally and completely without merit. *Winick Corp. v County Sanitation Dist. No. 2* (1986) 185 CA3d 1170, 1176, 230 CR 289.

(4) *Determine the amount of sanctions.* If it is determined that any of the affidavits were presented in bad faith or solely for purposes of delay, award the reasonable expenses that the filing of the affidavits caused the other party to incur. [CCP §437c\(j\)](#).

(5) *Prepare, or direct counsel to prepare, and enter a written order.* The statute does not specify formal order requirements.

- ➡ **JUDICIAL TIP:** Best practice is to issue a written order and to avoid stating conclusions in the words of the statute. Give a factual recital, with reasonable specificity, of the circumstances leading to the order. If desired, incorporate by reference portions of a party's papers that adequately set forth the conduct, circumstances, and legal arguments providing the bases for the court's conclusions.

(6) *Notify the State Bar if sanctions against an attorney are \$1000 or greater.* See [Bus & P C §6086.7\(c\)](#) (excludes discovery sanctions).

### 5. [§3.15] Checklist: Expenses Under CCP §473(c) on Relief From Default

(1) *Consider a party's request or initiate on court's own motion for sanctions based on the court ordering relief from default. CCP §473(c).* Whenever the court grants relief from a default, default judgment, or dismissal based on CCP §473(c), the court may (CCP §473(c)(1)):

- Impose a penalty of no greater than \$1000 upon an offending attorney or party.
- Direct that an offending attorney pay an amount no greater than \$1000 to the State Bar Client Security Fund.
- Grant other relief as is appropriate.

*Note:* When the court grants relief from a default or default judgment upon the affidavit of the defaulting party's attorney attesting to the attorney's mistake, inadvertence, surprise, or neglect, the relief may not be made conditional upon the attorney's payment of compensatory legal fees or costs or monetary penalties imposed by the court or upon compliance with other sanctions ordered by the court. CCP §473(c)(2).

For the applicable law, see §§3.70–3.75.

(2) *Determine whether the party or court gave adequate notice and an opportunity to be heard.* Adequate notice is mandated by the due process clauses of the federal and state constitutions. *Sole Energy Co. v Hodges* (2005) 128 CA4th 199, 207, 26 CR3d 823; *Marriage of Reese & Guy* (1999) 73 CA4th 1214, 1220, 87 CR2d 339.

(3) *Determine what sanctions are appropriate.* The court may impose a penalty or grant other relief as appropriate. CCP §473(c).

(4) *Prepare, or direct counsel to prepare, and enter a written order.* The statute does not specify formal order requirements. CCP §473(c)(1).

- **JUDICIAL TIP:** Best practice is to issue a written order and to avoid stating conclusions in the words of the statute. Give a factual recital, with reasonable specificity, of the circumstances leading to the order. If desired, incorporate by reference portions of a party's papers that adequately set forth the conduct, circumstances, and legal arguments providing the bases for the court's conclusions.

(5) *Notify the State Bar if sanctions against an attorney are \$1000 or greater.* See Bus & P C §6086.7(c) (excludes discovery sanctions).

## 6. [§3.16] Checklist: Expenses Under Cal Rules of Ct 2.30 for Violation of California Rules of Court

(1) *Consider a party's request or initiate on court's own motion Cal Rules of Ct 2.30 sanctions for violation of local court rules.* The court may order a person to pay reasonable monetary sanctions to the court or an aggrieved person, or both, for failure without good cause to comply with the applicable rules. For the purposes of this rule, "person" means a party, a party's attorney, a witness, and an insurer or any other individual or entity whose consent is necessary for the disposition of the case. [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30\(b\)](#).

A party's motion for sanctions must (1) state the applicable rule that has been violated; (2) describe the specific conduct that is alleged to have violated the rule; and (3) identify the attorney, law firm, party, witness, or other person against whom sanctions are sought. The court on its own motion may issue an order to show cause that must (1) state the applicable rule that has been violated, (2) describe the specific conduct that appears to have violated the rule, and (3) direct the attorney, law firm, party, witness, or other person to show cause why sanctions should not be imposed against them for violation of the rule. [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30\(c\)](#). For the applicable law, see §3.76.

(2) *Determine whether the party or court gave adequate notice and an opportunity to be heard.* Sanctions must not be imposed except on noticed motion by the party seeking sanctions or on the court's own motion after the court has provided notice and an opportunity to be heard. [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30\(b\), \(c\)](#).

(3) *Determine whether there are substantive grounds for imposing expenses.* Sanctions can be imposed for failure without good cause to comply with applicable Judicial Council rules. [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30\(b\)](#).

(4) *Determine what sanctions are appropriate.* The court may order the payment of reasonable monetary sanctions to the court or any aggrieved party. [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30\(b\)](#).

In addition, the court may order the person who has violated an applicable rule to pay the aggrieved party's reasonable expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees and costs, incurred in connection with the motion for sanctions or the order to show cause. [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30\(d\)](#).

*Note:* If a failure to comply with the rules is the responsibility of counsel and not of the party, any penalty is imposed on counsel and does not adversely affect the party's cause of action or defense thereto. [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30\(b\)](#).

(5) *Prepare, or direct counsel to prepare, and enter a written order.* An order imposing sanctions must be in writing and must recite in detail the conduct or circumstances justifying the order. [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30\(e\)](#).



- ☛ **JUDICIAL TIP:** Give a factual recital, with reasonable specificity, of the circumstances leading to the order. If desired, incorporate by reference portions of a party's papers that adequately set forth the conduct, circumstances, and legal arguments providing the bases for the court's conclusions.

(6) *Notify the State Bar if sanctions against an attorney are \$1000 or greater.* See [Bus & P C §6086.7\(c\)](#) (excludes discovery sanctions).

#### 7. [§3.17] Checklist: Expenses Under CCP §575.2 for Violation of Local Court Rules

(1) *Consider a party's request or initiate on court's own motion CCP §575.2 sanctions for violation of local court rules.* Local rules may provide that a failure to comply with their requirements is the basis for sanctions. CCP §575.2. For the applicable law, see [§§3.77-3.82](#).

(2) *Determine whether the party or court gave adequate notice and an opportunity to be heard.* No penalty may be imposed without prior notice to, and an opportunity to be heard by, the party against whom the penalty is sought to be imposed. [CCP §575.2](#)

(3) *Determine whether there are substantive grounds for imposing expenses.* Failure to comply with any local rules requirements can be the basis for sanctions if the local rules so provide. [CCP §575.2](#).

(4) *Determine what sanctions are appropriate.* The court may ([CCP §575.2](#)):

- Strike out all or any part of any pleading of that party,
- Dismiss the action or proceeding or any part thereof,
- Enter a judgment by default against that party,
- Impose other penalties of a lesser nature as otherwise provided by law, and
- Order that party or his or her counsel to pay to the moving party the reasonable expenses in making the motion, including reasonable attorney fees.

*Note:* If a failure to comply with these rules is the responsibility of counsel and not of the party, any penalty must be imposed on counsel and must not adversely affect the party's cause of action or defense thereto. [CCP §575.2](#).

(5) *Prepare, or direct counsel to prepare, and enter a written order.* The statute does not specify formal order requirements.

- ☛ **JUDICIAL TIP:** Best practice is to issue a written order and to avoid stating conclusions in the words of the statute. Give a factual recital, with reasonable specificity, of the circumstances

leading to the order. If desired, incorporate by reference portions of a party's papers that adequately set forth the conduct, circumstances, and legal arguments providing the bases for the court's conclusions.

(6) *Notify the State Bar if sanctions against an attorney are \$1000 or greater.* See [Bus & P C §6086.7\(c\)](#) (excludes discovery sanctions).

#### 8. [§3.18] Checklist: Sanctions Under Fam C §3027.1 for False Accusation of Child Abuse or Neglect in Child Custody Proceeding

(1) *Consider a request for sanctions made by a witness, party, or attorney.* [Fam C §3027.1\(a\)](#). For the applicable law, see [§§3.86-3.87](#).

(2) *Determine whether there was adequate notice and opportunity to be heard.* Once sanctions are requested, the court must schedule a hearing on an order to show cause why the requested sanctions should not be granted. [Fam C §3027.1\(b\)](#).

(3) *Determine whether a knowingly false accusation of child abuse or neglect was made during a custody proceeding based on the investigation conducted under [Fam C §3027](#) or other evidence presented.* [Fam C §3027.1\(a\)](#).

(4) *Determine the amount of sanctions.* The sanctions may not exceed all costs directly incurred in defending against the accusation plus reasonable attorney's fees incurred in recovering the sanctions. [Fam C §3027.1\(a\)](#).

(5) *Prepare, or direct counsel to prepare, and enter a written order.* *The statute does not specify formal order requirements.*

➡ **JUDICIAL TIP:** Best practice is to issue a written order and to avoid stating conclusions in the words of the statute. Give a factual recital, with reasonable specificity, of the circumstances leading to the order. If desired, incorporate by reference portions of a party's papers that adequately set forth the conduct, circumstances, and legal arguments providing the bases for the court's conclusions.

(6) *Notify the State Bar if sanctions against an attorney are \$1000 or greater.* See [Bus & P C §6086.7\(c\)](#) (excludes discovery sanctions).

#### 9. [§3.19] Checklist: Sanctions Under Fam C §271 for Frustrating Settlement of Family Law Case

(1) *Consider a request for attorneys' fees and costs in the nature of sanctions.* A request should be considered whenever a party's or attorney's uncooperative conduct has interfered with the general policy of

promoting settlements. [Fam C §271\(a\)](#). For the applicable law, see [§§3.88–3.89](#).

(2) *In determining whether to award sanctions under [Fam C §271](#), consider the following factors as they affect the parties' finances under [Fam C §271\(a\)](#):*

- Demonstration of financial need for the award is unnecessary.
- The imposition of sanctions under [Fam C §271](#) must not impose an unreasonable financial burden on the sanctioned party.
- In considering an award under [Fam C §271](#), the court must consider all evidence concerning the parties' assets, income, and abilities.

(3) *Give adequate notice and provide an opportunity to be heard.* [Fam C §271\(b\)](#).

(4) *Determine the amount of sanctions.* Sanctions awarded under [Fam C §271](#) must be payable only from the property or income of the sanctioned party or from the sanctioned party's share of the community property. [Fam C §271\(c\)](#).

(5) *Prepare, or direct counsel to prepare, and enter a written order.* The statute does not specify formal order requirements.

- ☛ **JUDICIAL TIP:** Best practice is to issue a written order and to avoid stating conclusions in the words of the statute. Give a factual recital, with reasonable specificity, of the circumstances leading to the order. If desired, incorporate by reference portions of a party's papers that adequately set forth the conduct, circumstances, and legal arguments providing the bases for the court's conclusions.

(6) *Notify the State Bar if sanctions against an attorney are \$1000 or greater.* See [Bus & P C §6086.7\(c\)](#) (excludes discovery sanctions).

## IV. APPLICABLE LAW

### A. Definition and Classification of Contempt

#### 1. [§3.20] Contempt Defined

Contempt is an act, committed in or out of the court's presence, that tends to impede, embarrass, or obstruct the court in the discharge of its duties. *In re Shortridge* (1893) 99 C 526, 532, 34 P 227. For examples of contemptuous acts, see [§§3.3–3.4](#). Contemptuous conduct is classified as direct, indirect, or hybrid. See [§3.26](#). Characterization of contempt as criminal, civil-coercive, or civil-punitive determines how a charge is adjudicated and what punishment is permitted.

## 2. [§3.21] Court’s Inherent and Statutory Contempt Power

A court has inherent power to exercise reasonable control over all proceedings connected with the litigation before it. *Cooper v Superior Court* (1961) 55 C2d 291, 301, 10 CR 842; *In re Jackson* (1985) 170 CA3d 773, 778, 216 CR 539. This inherent power includes the authority to punish offenders summarily for acts committed in the court’s immediate view and presence that impede, embarrass, or obstruct the court in the discharge of its duties. *In re Terry* (1888) 128 US 289, 307, 9 S Ct 77, 32 L Ed 405. The inherent power to punish contempt “is a necessary incident to the execution of the powers conferred upon the court, and is necessary to maintain its dignity, if not its very existence.” *In re Buckley* (1973) 10 C3d 237, 247, 110 CR 121 (quoting *In re Shortridge* (1893) 99 C 526, 532, 34 P 227). A court does not have inherent power, however, to conduct a criminal contempt prosecution under Pen C §166. See *In re McKinney* (1968) 70 C2d 8, 13, 73 CR 580; *People v Saffell* (1946) 74 CA2d Supp 967, 982, 168 P2d 497; discussion in §3.24.

Although the power to punish for contempt exists independently of statute (*Raskin v Superior Court* (1934) 138 CA 668, 669, 33 P2d 35), the Legislature has codified this principle by granting power to every court to provide for the orderly conduct of proceedings before it. CCP §128(a)(3); Pen C §1044 (duty of judge to control all proceedings during criminal trial); *Cantillon v Superior Court* (1957) 150 CA2d 184, 187, 309 P2d 890. See also CCP §128(a)(1), (4)–(6) (listing additional statutory powers of courts); *In re Easterbrook* (1988) 200 CA3d 1541, 1543 n4, 244 CR 652 (CCP §128 applies to criminal, as well as civil, cases). “Judicial officers” are granted similar powers (CCP §177(1)–(3) (listing powers of judicial officers)) and “may punish for contempt” in the cases provided in the Code of Civil Procedure. See CCP §178; Elec C §327 (“judicial officers” means judges). Code of Civil Procedure §1209 classifies certain acts as contempt of court. See §§3.3–3.4 for examples of contemptuous acts. The provisions of CCP §§1209–1222, which govern civil contempt proceedings, are intended to implement the court’s inherent power to conduct its business and enforce its lawful orders. *Bridges v Superior Court* (1939) 14 C2d 464, 474, 94 P2d 983, rev’d on other grounds in (1941) 314 US 252. Penal Code §166 enumerates acts that are punishable as criminal (misdemeanor) contempt. See §3.24.

In addition to the power to punish contempt, judicial officers have been given statutory authority to impose sanctions under specified circumstances. See CCP §§128.7, 177.5. For procedural checklists and examples for use in ordering sanctions in addition to, or as an alternative to, contempt in certain cases, see §§3.10–3.19. For discussion of use of caution in exercising contempt powers, see §3.33.

### 3. Limited Authority of Commissioners and Referees

#### a. [§3.22] No Inherent Contempt Power

Commissioners and referees do not have inherent contempt authority or the broad statutory contempt powers possessed by judges. See [CCP §259](#); [Govt C §72190](#); *Marcus v Workmen's Compensation Appeals Bd.* (1973) 35 CA3d 598, 603, 111 CR 101 (decided before enactment of [Lab C §5309\(c\)](#), authorizing delegation of contempt authority to workers' compensation judges). The list of statutory powers of court commissioners in [CCP §259](#), for example, does not include contempt. Furthermore, although "a judicial officer may punish for contempt in the cases provided in" the Code of Civil Procedure ([CCP §178](#)), the term "judicial officer" does not include a commissioner (see [Elec C §327](#)), and the code's general contempt provisions limit the power to a judge or court. See [CCP §§1209–1222](#). Therefore, absent a specific statutory authorization or the parties' agreement, a commissioner or referee may not exercise contempt power. See 35 CA3d at 603.

Limitations on the contempt authority of commissioners and referees have been expressly recognized in some statutes. For example, when a referee conducts examination proceedings under [CCP §708.140](#) to aid in the enforcement of a money judgment, "only the court that ordered the reference has power . . . to [p]unish for contempt for disobeying an order of the referee." [CCP §708.140\(a\)\(1\)](#). The referee may cite a person for contempt in the proceeding, but the judge who ordered the reference (or another judge) must adjudicate the contempt using the procedure for an indirect contempt proceeding. See [CCP §1211](#). Disorderly, contemptuous, or insolent behavior committed in the presence of any referee, while actually engaged in any trial or hearing under court order, is punishable as criminal contempt under [Pen C §166\(a\)\(2\)](#). See *People v Kalnoki* (1992) 7 CA4th Supp 8, 12–17, 9 CR2d 827 (commissioner does not have authority to cite party for contempt under this section).

The Workers' Compensation Appeals Board has been given similar but broader authority to issue writs, summons, warrants, and all necessary process in contempt proceedings, in the same manner and to the same extent as courts of record. See [Lab C §134](#). The board may delegate direct and hybrid contempt authority to a workers' compensation judge. See [Lab C §5309\(c\)](#) (specifying authority that can be delegated and defining hybrid contempt); *Runnion v WCAB* (1997) 59 CA4th 277, 286, 69 CR2d 105 (if WCAB wishes to use its substantial contempt power, it must meet standards set by CCP).

Short of exercising contempt authority, a commissioner or referee appears to have power to control proceedings before the court. This would include, for example, the authority to preserve order by requesting the

bailiff to remove disruptive persons from the courtroom. See [CCP §128\(a\)](#).

**b. [§3.23] Service as Temporary Judge Under Stipulation**

The contempt authority of a commissioner, referee, or pro tem judge who serves as a temporary judge on the parties' stipulation under [Cal Const art VI, §21](#) depends on the situation and the terms of the stipulation. Unless the stipulation includes a specific authorization to adjudicate contempt matters, no authority to adjudicate a contempt in a separate or ancillary proceeding is granted. See *Sarracino v Superior Court* (1974) 13 C3d 1, 10, 118 CR 21 (contempt proceeding may be seen as ancillary to principal action); *In re Frye* (1983) 150 CA3d 407, 409, 197 CR 755 (absent proper stipulation, commissioner lacks authority to hear and determine contempt proceeding, and any order of contempt is void). However, because a commissioner, referee, or pro tem judge who acts under stipulation has “full judicial powers” until final determination of the case (see [Cal Const art VI, §21](#); *In re Mark L.* (1983) 34 C3d 171, 178, 193 CR 165), he or she may adjudicate a direct contempt if the adjudication takes place before the case is finally determined and if the contemner stipulated to the commissioner, referee, or pro tem judge. *Fine v Superior Court* (2002) 97 CA4th 651, 664–665, 119 CR2d 376 (no express authority to issue contempt orders need be granted in stipulation; this authority is inherent in court's power to exercise reasonable control over its proceedings under [CCP §128\(a\)\(3\)](#)). See discussion in Rothman, California Judicial Conduct Handbook, §4.02 (3d ed CJA/Thomson West 2007); CALIFORNIA JUDGES BENCHBOOK: CIVIL PROCEEDINGS—BEFORE TRIAL, SECOND EDITION §17.75 (Cal CJER 2008).

A commissioner or referee serving as a temporary judge under a stipulation that does not include contempt authority may cite a person for direct contempt for an act committed in the court's immediate view and presence or for hybrid contempt for an absence or a late court appearance. However, a judicial officer may not adjudicate an indirect contempt, such as a violation of a court order. In that situation, the judicial officer would merely file a statement of facts alleging the contempt, which would proceed to adjudication and punishment by a judge. See [CCP §§1211–1217](#); 97 CA4th at 662–665; *Rosenstock v Municipal Court* (1976) 61 CA3d 1, 7, 132 CR 59; *Nierenberg v Superior Court* (1976) 59 CA3d 611, 615, 130 CR 847. For discussion of types of civil contempt, see [§3.26](#). For a sample form of statement of facts, see [§3.94](#). For an indirect contempt procedure checklist, see [§3.8](#).

- **JUDICIAL TIP:** Some judges suggest that the stipulation to a commissioner or referee as a pro tem judge includes the express authority to adjudicate contempt.

#### 4. Characterization as Civil or Criminal

##### a. [§3.24] Civil and Criminal Contempt Distinguished

Punishment for civil contempt is remedial and for the benefit of the complainant, while punishment for criminal contempt is characterized by an unconditional sentence imposed for punishment or deterrence. *Hicks v Feiock* (1988) 485 US 624, 634, 108 S Ct 1423, 99 L Ed 2d 721. However, as noted in *In re Feiock* (1989) 215 CA3d 141, 263 CR 437, there are problems with this distinction. For example, courts do not always know at the outset of a proceeding whether to provide appropriate criminal protections to the contemner because the punishment to be pronounced is not yet known. Moreover, penalties are often greater for civil contempt than for criminal contempt, and there are fewer constitutional protections. 215 CA3d at 145 n6.

Many of the same types of conduct are listed as civil contempt in CCP §1209 and criminal contempt in Pen C §166. However, criminal contempt prosecutions under Pen C §166 do not fall within a court's inherent contempt power but are governed by rules applicable to prosecution of misdemeanors. See *In re McKinney* (1968) 70 C2d 8, 13, 73 CR 580; *People v Saffell* (1946) 74 CA2d Supp 967, 982, 168 P2d 497.

Willful disobedience of the terms of any process or order lawfully issued by any court is punishable as contempt under Pen C §166(a)(4). Punishment for contempt under this section requires a clear, intentional violation of a specific, narrowly drawn order; specificity of the order is an essential prerequisite of the contempt citation. *People v Moses* (1996) 43 CA4th 462, 468, 50 CR2d 665. See *People v Greenfield* (1982) 134 CA3d Supp 1, 4, 184 CR 604 (crime of contempt is general intent, not specific intent, crime).

A court cannot punish a violation of a condition of probation as contempt under Pen C §166(a)(4). *People v Johnson* (1993) 20 CA4th 106, 109, 24 CR2d 628. Nor can a criminal contempt of the juvenile court be punished under Pen C §166. *In re Ricardo A.* (1995) 32 CA4th 1190, 1199, 38 CR2d 586 (juvenile court contempt statute, Welf & I C §213, must be used); *In re Mary D.* (1979) 95 CA3d 34, 36-37, 156 CR 829 (Welf & I C §601 juvenile offender cannot be elevated to Welf & I C §602 juvenile criminal offender through use of contempt of court proceeding under Pen C §166(a)(4)). See *In re Francisco S.* (2000) 85 CA4th 946, 950, 958-959, 102 CR2d 514 (juvenile court cannot confine delinquent ward under its contempt power for more time than maximum confinement time permitted under offense that resulted in wardship, when contemptuous acts are violations of ward's probationary conditions).

For additional discussion of criminal contempt, see CALIFORNIA JUDGES BENCHBOOK: CIVIL PROCEEDINGS—BEFORE TRIAL, SECOND EDITION §17.76 (Cal CJER 2008).

### b. [§3.25] Criminal Nature of Civil Contempt

Civil contempt proceedings under CCP §§1209–1222, whether punitive or coercive, may arise out of either civil or criminal litigation. Furthermore, even though they are denominated civil, these proceedings are criminal in nature because of the penalties that a judge may impose. *People v Gonzalez* (1996) 12 C4th 804, 816, 50 CR2d 74. The constitutional rights of the accused must be observed. See *Hicks v Feiock* (1988) 485 US 624, 632, 108 S Ct 1423, 99 L Ed 2d 721 (guilt in *criminal* contempt proceeding must be proved beyond reasonable doubt); *Mitchell v Superior Court* (1989) 49 C3d 1230, 1256, 265 CR 144 (when there are punitive sanctions, guilt must be established beyond reasonable doubt); *People v Earley* (2004) 122 CA4th 542, 550, 18 CR3d 694 (defendant is entitled to due process, including a jury trial, in postverdict adjudication of acts of contempt defendant allegedly committed during trial). But see *In re Kreitman* (1995) 40 CA4th 750, 753, 47 CR2d 595 (no right to jury trial unless punishment is imprisonment for more than six months). An alleged contemnor is entitled to the full panoply of substantive and due process rights in adjudicating even civil contempt. *People v Kalnoki* (1992) 7 CA4th Supp 8, 11, 9 CR2d 827.

A waiver of the privilege against self-incrimination requires that the accused understand the choices available, unless he or she is represented by counsel and takes the stand voluntarily. Furthermore, if indigent, the accused can request appointment of the public defender under Govt C §27706(a). See also *County of Santa Clara v Superior Court* (1992) 2 CA4th 1686, 1694, 1696, 5 CR2d 7 (indigent litigant is entitled to have appointed counsel during contempt OSC hearing and county must pay for attorney under Pen C §987.2). For further discussion of these rights, see CALIFORNIA JUDGES BENCHBOOK: CIVIL PROCEEDINGS—BEFORE TRIAL, SECOND EDITION §17.77 (Cal CJER 2008). For discussion of double jeopardy implications, see §3.32.

## 5. Civil Contempt

### a. [§3.26] Direct, Indirect, or Hybrid

Direct contempt is committed in the immediate view and presence of the court or of the judge in chambers, and may be punished summarily. CCP §1211(a). For procedural checklist, see §3.7. For example, failure to comply with a court order to file an opening brief in a criminal appeal after numerous extensions of time is an act occurring in the immediate view and presence of the court under CCP §1211, and willful failure to comply with this order constitutes contempt under CCP §1209(a)(5). *In re Riordan* (2002) 26 C4th 1235, 1237, 115 CR2d 1; *In re Rubin* (2001) 25 C4th 1176, 1178–1179, 108 CR2d 593; *In re Garland* (2001) 25 C4th 1172, 1174–1175, 108 CR2d 591.



The facts supporting indirect contempt arise outside the judge's or court's presence and require a more elaborate procedure to notify the person charged and to allow him or her an opportunity to be heard. See [CCP §§1211–1217](#); *Arthur v Superior Court (1965)* 62 C2d 404, 407, 408, 42 CR 441. For procedural checklist, see [§3.8](#).

A hybrid contempt occurs in the court's presence but may be excused by matters that occur outside the courtroom. The most common example of hybrid contempt, and the context in which the modified contempt procedure developed, is the failure of an attorney to appear in court at the scheduled time. A hybrid contempt generally proceeds as a direct contempt, because the contemptuous act (failure to appear) happened in court. The accused in a hybrid contempt proceeding, however, must be afforded notice and a reasonable opportunity to present an excuse or explain the reasons for the conduct. See *Arthur v Superior Court, supra*; *In re Baroldi (1987)* 189 CA3d 101, 106, 234 CR 286, disapproved on other grounds in 23 C4th 215, 221 (direct contempt procedure may be followed, but due process requires court to confront attorney with charge and afford reasonable opportunity to present valid excuse).

- **JUDICIAL TIP:** In a typical case, when an attorney has failed to appear in court as required, the judge gives notice of the nature of the contempt charge(s) and the time of the hearing orally when the attorney next appears in the proceedings. An alternative is to issue and serve an order to show cause regarding the contempt. See *Arthur v Superior Court, supra*, 62 C2d at 408. For a sample form of an order to show cause, see [§3.93](#).

For statutory recognition and definition of hybrid contempt in a limited context, see [Lab C §5309\(c\)](#) (delegation of direct and hybrid contempt authority to workers' compensation judge). For a checklist of the hybrid contempt procedure, see [§3.9](#).

## **b. Punishment: Civil-Punitive or Civil-Coercive**

### **(1) [[§3.27](#)] Characterization**

Civil contempt proceedings under [CCP §1209](#) are characterized as either punitive or coercive, depending on the type of punishment imposed.

### **(2) [[§3.28](#)] Punitive Proceedings**

In punitive proceedings, commonly referred to as “civil-punitive,” the court may impose a fine not to exceed \$1000 and/or a term of imprisonment not to exceed five days to punish a party for each separate act of contempt. See [CCP §1218\(a\)](#); *Fine v Superior Court (2002)* 97 CA4th 651, 674, 119 CR2d 376 (five-day sentence was appropriate punishment for attorney adjudged in contempt for filing false statement of

disqualification under CCP §170.1). See also CCP §1218(b)–(c) (punishment for failure to comply with family court order). On what constitutes a separate act of contempt, see *Donovan v Superior Court* (1952) 39 C2d 848, 855, 250 P2d 246 (four distinguishable violations of injunction warranted multiple fines); *Conn v Superior Court* (1987) 196 CA3d 774, 786, 242 CR 148 (contemner’s repeated failures to turn over documents as ordered constituted single act of contempt). The test is whether there were separate insults to the court’s authority, several of which may occur on the same day. *Reliable Enterprises, Inc. v Superior Court* (1984) 158 CA3d 604, 621, 204 CR 786, disapproved on other grounds in 49 C3d 1230, 1248 n13 (multiple fines for separate violations of injunction occurring on different days).

The court may also order the contemner to pay the reasonable attorneys’ fees and costs incurred by the opposing party because of the contempt proceeding. See CCP §1218(a); *Share v Casiano Bel-Air Homeowners Ass’n* (1989) 215 CA3d 515, 524–526, 263 CR 753 (attorneys’ fee award based on parties’ contract). Attorneys’ fees may be awarded in a family law proceeding for violation of a court order. The provision in CCP §1218(c) for community service does not preclude the award of attorneys’ fees under CCP §1218(a). *Goold v Superior Court* (2006) 145 CA4th 1, 10–11, 51 CR3d 455. Lastly, the court may make other appropriate orders, but may not award compensatory damages to the opposing party in the contempt proceeding. The purpose of a contempt order is not to vindicate the opposing party’s rights but to preserve the dignity and authority of the court. *H. J. Heinz Co. v Superior Court* (1954) 42 C2d 164, 174–176, 266 P2d 5.

### (3) [§3.29] Coercive Proceedings

In coercive proceedings, the court uses imprisonment to compel performance of some act or duty required of a person that the person has the ability, but refuses, to perform, *e.g.*, to answer a question as a witness. CCP §1219(a). But see CCP §§1219(b) (no coercive imprisonment for refusal of sexual assault victim to testify about assault or for victim of domestic violence for refusal to testify about domestic violence). See also CCP §1219.5 (special contempt procedure when minor under 16 refuses to testify). The court must specify the act to be performed in the warrant of commitment. See CCP §1219(a); *Morelli v Superior Court* (1969) 1 C3d 328, 332, 82 CR 375; *H. J. Heinz Co. v Superior Court* (1954) 42 C2d 164, 174, 266 P2d 5.

- JUDICIAL TIP: In selecting the appropriate punishment, the court should weigh the effect of any mitigating circumstances. See §§3.37, 3.48.

#### (4) [§3.30] Termination of Underlying Action

Termination of the underlying action from which a contempt proceeding arises does not preclude the court from punishing contempt by imposing a fine or term of imprisonment under the limitations prescribed in [CCP §1218\(a\)](#) (\$1000 fine and/or five days imprisonment, as well as reasonable attorneys' fees and costs). See *Bank of America v Carr* (1956) 138 CA2d 727, 734, 292 P2d 587. Indefinite coercive imprisonment under [CCP §1219](#) for failure to perform an act must end, however, when the contemner no longer has the power to perform the act. For a witness who refuses to testify, this generally means the conclusion of the underlying proceeding. *McComb v Superior Court* (1977) 68 CA3d 89, 99, 137 CR 233. At that point, the incarceration becomes punitive and is subject to the five-day limitation in [CCP §1218](#) for punitive confinement. See [CCP §1218\(a\)](#); *In re Farr* (1974) 36 CA3d 577, 584, 111 CR 649.

A witness's coercive imprisonment may continue beyond the conclusion of the underlying proceeding, however, if there are additional reasons for requiring the testimony. See 36 CA3d at 584 (coercive incarceration of reporter who violated order prohibiting prejudicial pretrial publicity releases; continued commitment to supplement record on appeal and to control court officers). In such a situation, the court must determine the point at which the commitment ceases to serve its coercive purpose and becomes punitive in character. When that point is reached, the incarceration of the contemner becomes punitive and additional confinement is limited by the five-day maximum sentence provided in [CCP §1218\(a\)](#).

Because a contempt proceeding is a separate and distinct action from the criminal proceeding in which the alleged contemptuous acts occurred, a bail bond issued with respect to the criminal charges does not also cover the contempt charge. *People v King Bail Bond Agency* (1990) 224 CA3d 1120, 1124–1125, 274 CR 335.

#### (5) [§3.31] Penalty Assessment

A penalty assessment must be levied on every fine imposed and collected by the courts for criminal offenses. [Pen C §1464\(a\)](#). Most judges believe that this provision does not apply to a civil contempt "fine" under [CCP §1218](#), because contempt punished under [CCP §§1209–1222](#) is not a criminal offense.

#### c. [§3.32] Double Jeopardy Considerations

The preclusion of multiple punishment in [Pen C §654](#) applies to punishment for contempt under [CCP §1218](#). *Mitchell v Superior Court* (1989) 49 C3d 1230, 1246, 265 CR 144; *In re Farr* (1976) 64 CA3d 605, 614, 134 CR 595. For example, a defendant who was previously held in

civil contempt under CCP §1209 and given a punitive sentence of a \$500 fine and five days in jail may not be prosecuted for criminal contempt under CCP §166 for the same conduct. But see *Mulvany v Superior Court* (1986) 184 CA3d 906, 908–909, 229 CR 334 (removal of order to show cause re contempt from calendar without notice to citee or his counsel does not require dismissal of contempt citation under doctrine of double jeopardy).

If the prior order of confinement for contempt was coercive in nature, rather than punitive, double jeopardy probably does not bar criminal prosecution for the conduct. See Pen C §654; *People v Derner* (1986) 182 CA3d 588, 592, 227 CR 344 (defendant's contempt conviction for failing to return custody of his daughter to his ex-wife did not prohibit subsequent felony prosecution under Pen C §278.5 based on same act, because primary purpose of contempt order was to dissuade defendant from continuing to disregard family court orders and not merely to punish him for his past violations of those orders); *People v Lombardo* (1975) 50 CA3d 849, 854, 123 CR 755 (decided under double jeopardy clause of Fifth Amendment, before amendment of Pen C §654). See also *People v Batey* (1986) 183 CA3d 1281, 1290, 228 CR 787 (contempt proceedings punished under CCP §1218, with a suspension of punishment conditioned on future compliance, did not pose double jeopardy bar to prosecution for child stealing under Pen C §278.5 arising from same conduct); *People v Moses* (1996) 43 CA4th 462, 466–471, 50 CR2d 665 (contempt is not lesser included offense of Pen C §278.5).

## B. Direct Contempt Procedure

### 1. [§3.33] Cautious Exercise of Direct Contempt Power

A direct contempt may be punished summarily by the court. CCP §1211; *Boysaw v Superior Court* (2000) 23 C4th 215, 219–223, 96 CR2d 531. All that is required is an order reciting the facts adjudging the person guilty and prescribing the punishment. See CCP §1211; 23 C4th at 220. Because this action lacks the usual procedural safeguards and is subject to possible abuse by an arbitrary judge, direct contempt orders in particular are carefully reviewed and strictly construed by appellate courts. Therefore, a trial judge must carefully comply with all procedural requirements. *Smith v Superior Court* (1968) 68 C2d 547, 560, 68 CR 1.

The power to adjudicate direct contempt must be used prudently and with a view toward promoting the orderly administration of law rather than any form of vindication of a judge's character. *Lyons v Superior Court* (1955) 43 C2d 755, 762, 278 P2d 681, quoting *People v Turner* (1850) 1 C 152.

In *Gallagher v Municipal Court* (1948) 31 C2d 784, 794, 192 P2d 905, the California Supreme Court cautioned:

Broadly speaking, judges are empowered to punish summarily for contempt of court in order to facilitate the orderly administration of justice. Disobedience of the court orders tends to lessen the effect of those orders; intemperate behavior in the course of a trial [citations] lessens the mastery of the trial judge over the progress of the proceedings and thus tends to obstruct the course of the trial. Considerable summary power, not usually available to the officers of any other branch of government, is therefore vested in judges. If that power is not wisely exercised, it can readily become an instrument of oppression. In a summary contempt proceeding the judge who metes out the punishment is usually the injured party and the prosecutor as well. Since such a situation invites caprice, appellate courts almost without exception require that the order adjudging a person in direct contempt of court recite in detail the facts constituting the alleged transgression rather than the bare conclusions of the trial judge.

In dealing with conduct that allegedly is disrespectful of the court, the judge must be “long of fuse and somewhat thick of skin.” *DeGeorge v Superior Court* (1974) 40 CA3d 305, 312, 114 CR 860; see *In re Grossman* (1972) 24 CA3d 624, 628, 101 CR 176 (judge should consider in serenity of chambers whether reaction is simply judicial nerves on edge).

➤ **JUDICIAL TIP:** Experienced judges rarely use the contempt power to control their courtrooms. They rely instead on such techniques as strictly monitoring the decorum of the court’s staff, maintaining an atmosphere of formality, enforcing adherence by all participants to clear rules of demeanor, and promptly correcting and admonishing offenders. If a court order has been violated, many judges consider imposing sanctions under [CCP §177.5](#). Because the procedure for imposing these sanctions is less cumbersome than a contempt adjudication, and because sanctions do not carry the stigma of contempt, they are less likely to be resisted. These judges, therefore, invoke contempt only as a last resort. See Rothman, *California Judicial Conduct Handbook* §§4.05–4.07 (3d ed CJA/Thomson West 2007).

A judge is responsible for knowing or researching the proper contempt procedures. A judge’s ignorance or misuse of these procedures may constitute bad faith and justify disciplinary proceedings for willful and prejudicial misconduct. See, e.g., *Kloepfer v Commission on Judicial Performance* (1989) 49 C3d 826, 858, 264 CR 100 (injudicious use of contempt power was willful and prejudicial misconduct); *Ryan v*

*Commission on Judicial Performance* (1988) 45 C3d 518, 533, 247 CR 378 (experienced judge should have known that contempt order was both substantively and procedurally invalid); *Cannon v Commission on Judicial Qualifications* (1975) 14 C3d 678, 694, 122 CR 778 (judge never sought to establish grounds on which contempt citations were based).

## 2. [§3.34] Warning Requirement

A warning is required before citing an attorney for contempt based on the tone of voice used by the attorney. *Boysaw v Superior Court* (2000) 23 C4th 215, 222–223, 96 CR2d 531. No warning is required if the statement is contemptuous on its face. *In re Grossman* (1972) 24 CA3d 624, 639, 101 CR 176. Unless the conduct is outrageous and immediately recognizable as an act of contempt, the judge must warn the person that further similar conduct will result in a citation for contempt. The warning must be made on the record, and any contempt order must recite the warning that was given. *Boysaw v Superior Court, supra*, 23 C4th at 222–223; *In re Hallinan* (1969) 71 C2d 1179, 1181, 81 CR 1. See *People v Chong* (1999) 76 CA4th 232, 243–245, 90 CR2d 198 (judge repeatedly admonished attorney for contemptuous conduct throughout trial before citing attorney for contempt). What is required to support a finding of direct contempt in such a case is not simply that the alleged contemner used an objectionable tone of voice, but that he or she continued to do so after being admonished. *Boysaw v Superior Court, supra*, 23 C4th at 222.

A judge, however, may find an attorney in contempt even though the attorney has not engaged in a pattern of repeated violations before the judge. A judge has wide latitude to determine what conduct “so infects orderly judicial proceedings that contempt is permitted.” Because the judge may need to act quickly “to prevent a breakdown of the proceedings,” a single violation may be sufficient. *Pounders v Watson* (1997) 521 US 982, 988–990, 117 S Ct 2359, 2362–2363, 138 L Ed 2d 976 (attorney willfully asked inappropriate questions after judge admonished attorney to avoid subject).

## 3. When To Cite and Adjudicate

### a. [§3.35] Timing

Subject to the general policy that the contempt power should be used with prudence and caution (see §3.33), contemptuous conduct should be cited and adjudicated as soon as possible. The effectiveness of a proper exercise of the contempt power may be directly related to the timeliness of the order. If the contempt proceeding is to be meaningful, it is important that inappropriate and offensive conduct be dealt with promptly when it occurs to underscore the link between the cause and its effect. *Bloom v Superior Court* (1986) 185 CA3d 409, 412, 229 CR 747; *In re Grossman*

(1972) 24 CA3d 624, 628, 101 CR 176. A prompt completion of the process through judgment, with a stay of execution of the sentence, permits the contemner to seek appellate review by writ while allowing the underlying litigation to proceed without interruption. See §§3.38–3.39 for discussion of staying execution, and §3.51 for discussion of appellate review.

Many judges, however, defer adjudication of contempt for courtroom misconduct to the conclusion of a pending trial, unless prompt punishment is imperative. See *Hanson v Superior Court* (2001) 91 CA4th 75, 81–82, 109 CR2d 782 (“summarily,” as used in CCP §1211, refers to character of contempt proceeding, not its timing, and does not demand instant punishment). Due process then requires notice and an opportunity to be heard. The hearing may, and sometimes must, be set before another judge. When another judge adjudicates the contempt, the contempt is no longer direct, because it was not committed in the presence of this judge, but is now indirect and must be adjudicated using the procedures for indirect contempt. 91 CA4th at 82.

Certain types of direct contempt hearings may be postponed until after the trial has been completed if the alleged contemptuous conduct is not disrupting the trial and there is no jury to be prejudiced. See *Betsworth v Workers’ Compensation Appeals Bd.* (1994) 26 CA4th 586, 597, 31 CR2d 664 (alleged contempt was personal disrespect to workers’ compensation referee). If the original judge is so personally involved that his or her perspective has been affected, adjudication of contempt based on personal disrespect should be postponed and another judge obtained to hear the case. 26 CA4th at 596.

There is no statutory time limit for adjudicating contempt. The determination must be made within a reasonable time, however, or the court loses jurisdiction to act on the contempt. *In re Foote* (1888) 76 C 543, 544, 18 P 678 (jurisdiction lost because no action taken until 50 days after direct contempt occurred).

#### **b. [§3.36] Personal Embroilment of Trial Judge**

The rules on disqualification of a judge (CCP §§170–170.6), including those for self-disqualification, do not apply to direct contempt proceedings. *Blodgett v Superior Court* (1930) 210 C 1, 9, 290 P 293. However, if the contemptuous conduct is a personal attack on the judge, and the judge does not cite the contemner at the time the contempt is committed but waits until the end of the trial, procedural due process may require that the contempt be adjudicated by a different judge. Due process requires a new and impartial judge only when there is evidence that the trial judge has become so “personally embroiled” with a lawyer in the trial as to make the judge unfit to sit in judgment on the contempt charge. See *Mayberry v Pennsylvania* (1971) 400 US 455, 463, 91 S Ct 499, 27 L Ed

2d 532. It is a violation of due process for the judge to serve as judge and prosecutor when the alleged contempt did not disrupt the judicial process, but instead allegedly demonstrated personal disrespect to the judge and the judge has become embroiled in that disrespect. *Betsworth v Workers' Compensation Appeals Bd.* (1994) 26 CA4th 586, 596, 31 CR2d 664.

Recusal because of personal embroilment in the controversy is not necessary when (1) the contempt was cited and adjudicated immediately after it occurred, and (2) the judge's involvement was not personal but was designed to protect the process of a fair trial. See *Hawk v Superior Court* (1974) 42 CA3d 108, 133, 116 CR 713; *DeGeorge v Superior Court* (1974) 40 CA3d 305, 315, 114 CR 860.

#### 4. [§3.37] Effect of Mitigating Circumstances or Apology

In adjudicating an alleged contempt, the judge should give the contemner an opportunity to present a defense or explain mitigating circumstances. See *Hawk v Superior Court* (1974) 42 CA3d 108, 131, 116 CR 713. Even when a finding of contempt appears essential to the proper conduct of the court's business, the court should look for and carefully consider mitigating circumstances in cases of direct contempt. See *Lyons v Superior Court* (1955) 43 C2d 755, 762, 278 P2d 681 (attorney's late appearance may have been caused by illness).

The effect of an apology as a mitigating factor to the contempt lies in the sound discretion of the judge. Apologies, if sincere and not exacerbations of the affront, are generally regarded with favor by the courts. *In re Buckley* (1973) 10 C3d 237, 257, 110 CR 121; *In re Carrow* (1974) 40 CA3d 924, 933, 115 CR 601. An apology should be given serious consideration, and the judge should be inclined to accept any reasonable apology for the offender's conduct. See *Lyons v Superior Court, supra*, 43 C2d at 762.

#### 5. Stay of Execution of Contempt Order

##### a. [§3.38] Mandatory Stay Provisions

Code of Civil Procedure §§128(b) and 1209(c) require a stay of execution of a contempt order affecting "an attorney, his or her agent, investigator, or any person acting under the attorney's direction, in the preparation and conduct of any action or proceeding." The execution of any sentence with respect to these persons must be stayed for three court days to enable the contemner to file a petition for extraordinary relief testing the lawfulness of the contempt order. Similar mandatory stay provisions apply to an order affecting a "public safety employee" for failure to comply with a subpoena (see CCP §§128(c), 1209(d)), a victim of sexual assault for refusal to testify concerning the assault (see CCP



§128(d)), and a victim of domestic violence for refusing to testify concerning the violence (see CCP §128(e)).

The mandatory stay provisions contain an exception for a contempt order that is based on conduct proscribed by Bus & P C §6068(b) relating to an attorney's duty to maintain the respect due to courts and judicial officers. See CCP §§128(b), 1209(c). Many judges recommend granting a stay, even though the statute does not mandate it.

#### b. [§3.39] Practical Considerations

Even when a stay is not mandatory, the judge should generally postpone execution of sentence if immediate jailing of the contemner is likely to interfere with any substantial rights of the litigants. A disruptive attorney should not be immediately jailed in midtrial for contempt except in extraordinary circumstances. Execution should be stayed until the trial is over. See *People v Fusaro* (1971) 18 CA3d 877, 890, 96 CR 368, disapproved on other grounds in 25 C3d 283, 292. The court should also consider staying execution of sentence when the contemner is a party or witness if immediate jailing will unreasonably interfere with the rights of any of the parties or unnecessarily delay the trial. The threat of execution of a jail term may deter further contemptuous conduct.

As a practical matter, some judges strongly urge that, except in extreme circumstances, the court should grant a short stay of execution, particularly when imprisonment is imposed, to permit review of the contempt order. They observe that because the contempt order cannot be appealed, it is unfair to order immediate imprisonment of the contemner, whose attorney must then hastily prepare a petition for writ of habeas corpus and a request for the contemner's immediate release pending the appellate court's determination of the petition. All parties, as well as the appellate courts, are better served by permitting the contemner to compile a proper record and to present authorities pertinent to the review of the contempt order.

### 6. Requirements of Judgment

#### a. [§3.40] Contents

A direct contempt order must recite the facts that occurred in the immediate view and presence of the court, adjudge that the person is guilty of contempt, and prescribe the punishment. See CCP §1211(a); *Boysaw v Superior Court* (2000) 23 C4th 215, 220, 96 CR2d 531; *In re Ringgold* (2006) 142 CA4th 1001, 1011, 48 CR3d 507. Compliance with CCP §1211 is a jurisdictional requirement, and an order summarily punishing a direct contempt is valid only if it recites facts with sufficient particularity to demonstrate on its face that the person's conduct constitutes a legal contempt. 23 C4th at 220, 222; *In re Buckley* (1973) 10

C3d 237, 247, 110 CR 121; *In re D.W.* (2004) 123 CA4th 491, 500–501, 20 CR3d 274; *Fine v Superior Court* (2002) 97 CA4th 651, 666, 119 CR2d 376; *In re Willon* (1996) 47 CA4th 1080, 1089, 55 CR2d 245. The order must recite all elements of the contempt. *In re Morelli* (1970) 11 CA3d 819, 851 n23, 91 CR 72. For example, a court’s order finding a witness in contempt for refusing to answer specified questions was held to be insufficient; the order only generally described the witness’s conduct and did not state the underlying facts, such as the witness’s invocations of privilege, the court’s rulings on the claims of privilege, or the appearance and participation of counsel. *In re D.W.*, *supra*, 123 CA4th at 500. A contempt order was insufficient when it only found that an attorney failed to sign a document as ordered. The contempt order did not set forth the court order that required the attorney to provide documents, which required a signature, to transfer property. *In re Ringgold*, *supra*, 142 CA4th at 1011. There is no requirement, however, that the order must specifically state that the contemptuous conduct occurred “in the immediate view and presence of the court,” when the facts recited in the order make that fact clear. *Boysaw v Superior Court*, *supra*, 23 C4th at 220–221 (order recited that defense counsel yelled at judge in front of jury in disrespectful tone of voice making it clear that cited conduct occurred in immediate view and presence of court). For discussion of burden of proof, see §3.25.

Specificity is an essential element of a contempt citation; punishment for contempt can only rest on a clear, intentional violation of a specific, narrowly drawn court order. *Board of Supervisors v Superior Court* (1995) 33 CA4th 1724, 1737, 39 CR2d 906. The contemptuous acts must be detailed with sufficient particularity so that no reference to an extrinsic document or to speculation is required. *In re Littlefield* (1993) 5 C4th 122, 138, 19 CR2d 248 (order holding attorney in contempt for failing to comply with June 20 discovery order was overturned on appeal; written judgment of contempt made no reference to June 20 order, but instead referred only to a June 17 discovery order).

If adjudication depends on volume, accent, inflection, tone of voice, manner, facial expression, or demeanor, this aspect must be described in detail. Any admonition, rebuke, or warning that was given should be recited. *Gallagher v Municipal Court* (1948) 31 C2d 784, 797, 192 P2d 905. If a warning was required because the statement made was not contemptuous on its face, or because the alleged contemptuous conduct was the attorney’s objectionable tone of voice, the order must recite the warning that was given. *Boysaw v Superior Court*, *supra*, 23 C4th at 222–223; *In re Hallinan* (1969) 71 C2d 1179, 1181, 81 CR 1; see §3.34 for discussion of warning requirement.

When the contempt consists of the filing of a false affidavit of disqualification under CCP §170.1, due process is satisfied if the judge

makes an order reciting the facts constituting the contempt, adjudging the person guilty, and prescribing the punishment. *Fine v Superior Court, supra*, 97 CA4th at 666, 673–674 (contempt order set forth sufficient facts to show that attorney’s statement of disqualification contained five false allegations accusing commissioner of judicial misconduct, and also recited sufficient facts to show attorney filed statement for improper purpose of delaying proceedings after having filed several previous disqualification challenges that were without merit). A charge of judicial misconduct unsupported by facts constitutes a groundless attack on the integrity of a judicial officer and is contemptuous on its face. When faced with such an attack, the judicial officer is only required to state in the order of contempt that the charge is unsupported by fact and is false. 97 CA4th at 671.

On the punishments that may be imposed, see §§3.27–3.31.

#### **b. [§3.41] Preparation by Trial Judge**

The trial judge should personally prepare the contempt order and not delegate that duty to counsel or the clerk. The judge should take meticulous care in preparing the order to increase the likelihood that it will be upheld. *Hawk v Superior Court* (1974) 42 CA3d 108, 125 n16, 116 CR 713. It is advisable for the judge to set forth the exact words that constitute the contempt, although this is not mandatory as long as the order states the facts with sufficient particularity to show without the aid of speculation that a contempt actually occurred. See *In re Grossman* (1972) 24 CA3d 624, 633, 101 CR 176. The judge should also attach a transcript of the hearing, if available. Many judges describe in the order any mitigating circumstances or apologies, and state their effect on the severity of the punishment. See §3.37. For a sample form of order and judgment of contempt, see §3.94.

#### **c. [§3.42] Entry and Finality**

The court must sign and enter the written judgment expeditiously, particularly if imprisonment is ordered, because the contemner cannot challenge the validity of the judgment until it is entered. *In re Easterbrook* (1988) 200 CA3d 1541, 1544–1545, 244 CR 652 (untimely order set aside by reviewing court); *In re Jones* (1975) 47 CA3d 879, 881, 120 CR 914 (contempt order signed and entered eight days after contemner was jailed was deemed too late; writ of habeas corpus was issued releasing contemner from jail). The judgment must be entered in the court’s permanent minutes, not just in the case file. 47 CA3d at 881.

The judgments and orders of the court in contempt cases are final and conclusive. CCP §1222. Once a judge has reduced the contempt order to writing and signed it, the contempt order cannot be amended to correct a deficiency; neither a trial court nor an appellate court may amend it for

any reason. An appellate court may not remand a contempt matter to the trial court after declaring the order void, because reinstating the proceeding is contrary to the finality requirement of [CCP §1222](#). *In re Baroldi* (1987) 189 CA3d 101, 111, 234 CR 286, disapproved on other grounds in 23 C4th 215, 221 (court criticized finality requirement); *County of Lake v Superior Court* (1977) 67 CA3d 815, 818, 136 CR 830. Instead, the contemner must be released. See *In re Baroldi, supra*, 189 CA3d at 111.

A judge must notify the State Bar of any final order of contempt issued against an attorney that may involve grounds warranting discipline, *i.e.*, a willful breach of the California Rules of Professional Conduct adopted and approved under [Bus & P C §§6076 and 6077](#). The notification to the State Bar must include a copy of the relevant court minutes, the final order, and any transcript of the contempt proceeding. [Bus & P C §6086.7\(a\)](#). The judge must notify the attorney that the State Bar is being notified. [Bus & P C §6086.7](#).

### C. Indirect Contempt Procedure

#### 1. Affidavit, Declaration, or Statement of Facts

##### a. [§3.43] Required To Initiate Proceeding

Indirect contempt proceedings are initiated by presenting to the court or judge an affidavit (or declaration under [CCP §2015.5](#)) of the facts constituting contempt, or a statement of the facts by a commissioner, referee, arbitrator, or other judicial officer. See [CCP §1211](#); *Moss v Superior Court* (1998) 17 C4th 396, 401 n1, 71 CR2d 215; *In re Morelli* (1970) 11 CA3d 819, 829, 91 CR 72 (term “other judicial officer” includes reporter officiating at oral deposition). See [§§3.22–3.23](#) for discussion of limitations on contempt power of commissioners and referees. For a sample form of statement of facts, see [§3.94](#). The affidavit, declaration, or statement is like a complaint in a criminal case in that it frames the issues and must charge facts that show a contempt has been committed. Because indirect contempt proceedings are criminal in nature, an accused is entitled to constitutional guaranties of due process of law, including reasonably clear notice of the charges. *Reliable Enterprises, Inc. v Superior Court* (1984) 158 CA3d 604, 616, 619, 204 CR 786, disapproved on other grounds in 49 C3d 1230, 1248 n13.

Deferring the adjudication of a direct contempt to a later time before another judge changes the characterization of the contempt proceeding from direct to indirect contempt and requires that indirect contempt proceedings be used. *Hanson v Superior Court* (2001) 91 CA4th 75, 82, 109 CR2d 782.

### b. [§3.44] Sufficiency and Amendment

Liberal rules governing construction and amendment of the affidavit, declaration, or statement of facts under [CCP §1211.5](#) virtually eliminate the need to dismiss a contempt charge because of a defective pleading. The statute represents the Legislature's intent that contempt proceedings be adjudicated and reviewed on the merits and that contempt judgments not be set aside because of technical defects in the initiating affidavit. *Reliable Enterprises, Inc. v Superior Court* (1984) 158 CA3d 604, 617, 204 CR 786, disapproved on other grounds in 49 C3d 1230, 1248 n13. However, failure to file any affidavit initiating the contempt proceeding renders the contempt order void in excess of jurisdiction. *In re Cowan* (1991) 230 CA3d 1281, 1282, 1286, 281 CR 740 (affidavit requirement cannot be met solely by live testimony).

If no objection is made to the sufficiency of the affidavit, declaration, or statement of facts, the necessary elements may be established by the facts proved at the hearing; the court must order the initiating document to be amended to conform to proof. See [CCP §1211.5\(a\)](#); *Reliable Enterprises, Inc. v Superior Court, supra*, 158 CA3d at 617 (failure of initiating affidavits to state that alleged contemner was able to comply with injunction or that any violation was willful did not result in miscarriage of justice when there was no objection to trial court's failure to amend affidavits to conform to proof as required by [CCP §1211.5](#)). The court may order or permit amendment of the affidavit for any defect or deficiency at any stage of the proceedings; the proceedings must continue as if the affidavit had been originally filed as amended, unless a reasonable postponement is necessary to enable the accused to controvert the additional facts. See [CCP §1211.5\(b\)](#).

A trial, order, judgment, or other proceeding is not affected by a defect or imperfection in form that does not prejudice "a substantial right of the person accused on the merits." [CCP §1211.5\(c\)](#). No order or judgment of conviction will be set aside, and no new trial will be granted for a pleading error, unless it has resulted in a "miscarriage of justice." See [CCP §1211.5\(c\)](#); *Reliable Enterprises, Inc. v Superior Court, supra*, 158 CA3d at 620 (due process violations resulting from failure to amend affidavit constituted miscarriage of justice requiring annulment of three contempt adjudications based on conduct occurring after acts alleged in affidavit).

### c. [§3.45] Counteraffidavits or Counterdeclarations

Although not required by statute, the alleged contemner may serve and file a counteraffidavit or counterdeclaration. This paper is in the nature of an answer. *Lyon v Superior Court* (1968) 68 C2d 446, 452, 67 CR 265. The allegations in the original affidavit or declaration are deemed

admitted if the accused files a counterdocument that fails to deny them; a hearing is required only on the controverted issues. *Crittenden v Superior Court* (1964) 225 CA2d 101, 107, 36 CR 903. Judges generally agree that if no counterdocument is filed, all issues are deemed controverted.

## 2. Order To Show Cause or Warrant of Attachment

### a. [§3.46] Issuance

Code of Civil Procedure §1212 provides that the court may issue a warrant of attachment, similar to a bench warrant, to obtain jurisdiction over the alleged contemner in an indirect contempt proceeding, but this method has seldom been used except in Los Angeles County. The customary procedure in most courts is to issue an order to show cause. See CCP §1212; *Arthur v Superior Court* (1965) 62 C2d 404, 408, 42 CR 441. Ordinarily, a warrant of attachment or bench warrant is issued only when the alleged contemner, or his or her attorney, fails to appear in response to an order to show cause. See *In re Morelli* (1970) 11 CA3d 819, 847 n21, 91 CR 72; *Muller v Reagh* (1963) 215 CA2d 831, 834, 30 CR 633. An endorsement on the warrant of attachment must state that the person charged may be released on the posting of a specified bail. CCP §1213.

### b. [§3.47] Service of Order To Show Cause

An order to show cause to bring a party into contempt must be served on the alleged contemner in the same manner as a summons, *i.e.*, by personal service on the contemner even if he or she is represented by counsel. See CCP §§1016–1017; *Cedars-Sinai Imaging Medical Group v Superior Court* (2000) 83 CA4th 1281, 1286–1288, 100 CR2d 320 (court does not have jurisdiction to proceed unless party charged is personally served with OSC). The order to show cause notifies the alleged contemner of the nature of the charges and the time of the hearing, and is the means for obtaining personal jurisdiction. Service of a subsequent order on the alleged contemner’s attorney is appropriate when the initial order to show cause was served on the contemner in the same manner as a summons. See *In re Morelli* (1970) 11 CA3d 819, 838, 91 CR 72.

For a sample form of an order to show cause in re contempt, see §3.93.

## 3. Hearing, Adjudication, and Judgment

### a. [§3.48] Accused’s Rights at Hearing

When the alleged contemner is brought before the court or appears, the court or judge must investigate the charge and hear any answer the accused may make, and may examine witnesses for or against the accused. CCP §1217.

The accused is entitled to a full and fair hearing that satisfies due process, and is entitled to present defenses to the charge of contempt (*Farace v Superior Court* (1983) 148 CA3d 915, 917, 196 CR 297), e.g., that the order is so uncertain that punishment for failure to comply with its terms would constitute a denial of due process, that the order is void or exceeds the court's jurisdiction, that the accused had no notice or knowledge of the order or is unable to comply with it. "Good faith" is not a defense to a charge of contempt, but must be considered by the court in determining the appropriate penalty. See *Conn v Superior Court* (1987) 196 CA3d 774, 788, 242 CR 148. If necessary, the court must adjourn the proceedings to afford the accused an adequate opportunity to gather evidence and prepare a defense. See CCP §1217; *In re Morelli* (1970) 11 CA3d 819, 850, 91 CR 72.

The accused's rights are essentially the same as those of a defendant in a criminal case (see *People v Gonzalez* (1996) 12 C4th 804, 816, 50 CR2d 74), except that there is no right to a jury trial unless the punishment is imprisonment for more than six months. *In re Kreitman* (1995) 40 CA4th 750, 753, 47 CR2d 595 (contemner was convicted of 42 counts of contempt and sentenced to 210 days in jail; judgment was reversed because of court's failure to advise contemner of jury trial right). See *People v Earley* (2004) 122 CA4th 542, 550, 18 CR3d 694 (in postverdict adjudication of acts of contempt defendant allegedly committed during trial, defendant is entitled to due process, including jury trial). For additional discussion, see §3.25.

An adjudication for indirect contempt requires that the facts show the contemner's willful and contemptuous refusal to obey a valid order of the court. *In re Cassil* (1995) 37 CA4th 1081, 1087-1088, 44 CR2d 267 (accused does not have burden of proving inability to comply with order). The finding must be beyond a reasonable doubt if the proceeding results in punitive sanctions. 37 CA4th at 1086. The court must advise the accused of (1) the burden of proof, (2) his or her right to testify or in the alternative to remain silent and appear by counsel, and (3) his or her right to confront and cross-examine witnesses. See *In re Morelli, supra*, 11 CA3d at 850.

A judgment of contempt cannot be based on a void order. *Davidson v Superior Court* (1999) 70 CA4th 514, 529, 82 CR2d 739. For example, a judgment confirming a settlement is invalid and cannot support a contempt order against a party for failure to comply with the settlement, when the settlement was signed by the party's attorney but not by the party, as required by CCP §664.6. 70 CA4th at 517-518, 529-531.

The accused must appear at the hearing because of the quasi-criminal nature of a civil contempt proceeding. The appearance may be in person, by an attorney, or by affidavit or declaration. *Farace v Superior Court, supra*, 148 CA3d at 917-918. If the accused fails to appear, the court may issue a bench warrant to bring the accused before the court (CCP §1212;

§3.46), continue the hearing (148 CA3d at 918), or proceed with the hearing if the court finds that the accused has been properly served and has voluntarily absented himself or herself with full knowledge of the hearing (148 CA3d at 918).

#### b. [§3.49] Adjudication and Judgment of Contempt

Judgments of direct and indirect contempt are prepared in generally the same manner, with two exceptions. First, a valid judgment of indirect contempt must show facts essential to establish jurisdiction for the making of the order, the defendant's knowledge of the order, his or her ability to comply, and willful disobedience. *Anderson v Superior Court* (1998) 68 CA4th 1240, 1245, 80 CR2d 891; *In re De La Parra* (1986) 184 CA3d 139, 143–144, 228 CR 864 (order that merely finds defendant in contempt of court for failure to comply with prior order is insufficient). Second, an indirect contempt judgment must state evidentiary facts supporting a finding of each of these elements, except that it need not state evidentiary facts supporting an ultimate finding of willful violation of an order, because this may be inferred from the circumstances. *Hanson v Superior Court* (2001) 91 CA4th 75, 81, 109 CR2d 782; *Reliable Enterprises, Inc. v Superior Court* (1984) 158 CA3d 604, 614, 204 CR 786, disapproved on other grounds in 49 C3d 1230, 1248 n13. On the punishments that may be imposed, see §§3.27–3.31. For a sample form of order and judgment of contempt, see §3.93. For discussion of a direct contempt judgment, including finality, see §§3.40–3.42.

The court may stay execution of the contempt judgment for a reasonable period to afford the contemner one last chance to comply with the order. See *Warner v Superior Court* (1954) 126 CA2d 821, 827, 273 P2d 89.

- JUDICIAL TIP: Many judges impose sentence, but then stay execution of the sentence to allow for a specifically described performance by a designated time. Proof of this performance must be delivered to the court at that time; otherwise, the sentence goes into effect. Such a stay may be coupled with a new order imposing monetary sanctions under CCP §177.5 for disobeying the previous order.

On reporting a final order of contempt to the State Bar, see §3.42.

#### D. [§3.50] Contempt for Failure To Pay Support

Judgments and orders made under the Family Code may be enforced by contempt. Fam C §290. When a court of competent jurisdiction makes a child support order, proof that the order was made, filed, and served on the parent or proof that the parent was present in court when the order was



made, and proof that the parent has not complied with the order, is prima facie evidence of contempt of court. CCP §1209.5. See *Moss v Superior Court* (1998) 17 C4th 396, 401, 71 CR2d 215; *County of Monterey v Banelos* (2000) 82 CA4th 1299, 1306–1307, 98 CR2d 710 (county that has paid support may enforce noncustodial parent’s obligation to pay support by contempt in same manner as custodial parent); *People v Dilday* (1993) 20 CA4th Supp 1, 3, 25 CR2d 386 (violation of *family* support order is evidence of contempt under CCP §1209.5). A spousal support order is also enforceable by contempt (*Bradley v Superior Court* (1957) 48 C2d 509, 522, 310 P2d 634), as is an order directing one spouse to deliver specified community property to the other spouse (*Marriage of Fithian* (1977) 74 CA3d 397, 404–406, 141 CR 506). The sanction of contempt may only be imposed for violation of a court order, not for violation of the parties’ agreement. *Martins v Superior Court* (1970) 12 CA3d 870, 876–877, 90 CR 898.

The alleged contemner’s ability to comply with the support order is not an element of the contempt. *In re Ivey* (2000) 85 CA4th 793, 798, 102 CR2d 447. Instead, inability to pay is an affirmative defense that must be proven by the alleged contemner. 85 CA4th at 798–799, 802. Ability to pay is an element of the contempt only when the alleged contempt occurs many years after the support order was entered. 85 CA4th at 799. A spouse who is experiencing financial difficulty in making support payments can avoid the possibility of contempt by filing an application to reduce support and demonstrating a material change in circumstances. *Marriage of Sachs* (2002) 95 CA4th 1144, 1154, 116 CR2d 273.

Contempt of a child support order may be based on a willful failure to seek and accept available employment commensurate with the alleged contemner’s skills and ability. *Moss v Superior Court, supra*, 17 C4th at 401.

The court is entitled to presume a party’s knowledge of the support order from the fact that the party’s attorney was present in court when the order was made and was thereafter served with a copy of the order. *In re Ivey, supra*, 85 CA4th at 805 (court may reasonably infer that father’s attorney informed father of order).

Each month that child, family, or spousal support has not been paid in full may be alleged as a separate count of contempt with punishment imposed for each count. CCP §1218.5(a). The statute of limitations for commencing a contempt action for failure to pay support is three years from the date the payment was due. CCP §1218.5(b). The statute of limitations for commencing a contempt proceeding to enforce any other order under the Family Code is two years from the time the alleged contempt occurred. CCP §1218.5(b). Dismissing the underlying action does not preclude the court from adjudicating a party’s contempt for his or her willful failure to comply with orders made in the action before

dismissal. *Moore v Superior Court* (1970) 8 CA3d 804, 810–811, 87 CR 620.

### E. [§3.51] Appellate Review of Contempt Proceedings

A person held in contempt has a right to swift and meaningful appellate review of the contempt order or judgment. *Bloom v Superior Court* (1986) 185 CA3d 409, 412, 229 CR 747. Code of Civil Procedure §1222 permits this immediate review by making a judgment and order in a contempt case final and conclusive. The judgment and order are not appealable (CCP §§904.1(a)(1) (no right of appeal in unlimited civil case), 904.2(a) (no right of appeal in limited civil case); *People v Gonzalez* (1996) 12 C4th 804, 816, 50 CR2d 74; *Davidson v Superior Court* (1999) 70 CA4th 514, 522, 82 CR2d 739), but may be reviewed by filing a petition for a writ of habeas corpus if the contemner is imprisoned (see Pen C §1473(a); *In re Buckley* (1973) 10 C3d 237, 259, 110 CR 121; *Davidson v Superior Court, supra*, 70 CA4th at 522; *In re De La Parra* (1986) 184 CA3d 139, 141, 228 CR 864). A contempt adjudication may also be reviewed by filing a petition for a writ of review. See CCP §1068; *People v Gonzalez, supra*, 12 C4th at 816; *Hanson v Superior Court* (2001) 91 CA4th 75, 80 n1, 109 CR2d 782 (appellate court treated habeas corpus petition as petition for writ of prohibition).

A trial court that improperly dismisses a contempt proceeding may be compelled by mandate to proceed with it. See CCP §1085; *Butler v Butler* (1967) 255 CA2d 132, 136, 62 CR 825.

The scope of review is generally confined to jurisdictional questions, and review of the evidence is limited to an inquiry into whether there is any substantial evidence of the jurisdictional facts. *In re Buckley, supra*, 10 C3d at 259; *In re Willon* (1996) 47 CA4th 1080, 1089, 55 CR2d 245. See, e.g., *Ketscher v Superior Court* (1970) 9 CA3d 601, 604–605, 88 CR 357 (court lacked jurisdiction to find party in contempt for violation of oral order that was not reduced to writing or entered in minutes and that was not definitive).

In reviewing a civil contempt order, an appellate court does not presume the order is correct. Because of the summary nature of civil contempt proceedings, all presumptions are drawn against the validity of the contempt order. “Practically speaking, this places the burden on the court to cross all the ‘i’s’ and dot all the ‘t’s.’” *In re D.W.* (2004) 123 CA4th 491, 501, 20 CR3d 274 (quoted to show even the appellate courts can get their “i’s” and “t’s” mixed up); *People v Kalnoki* (1992) 7 CA4th Supp 8, 11, 9 CR2d 827 (judgments of contempt are strictly construed in favor of contemnor).

## F. Sanctions Under CCP §128.7

### 1. [§3.52] Bases for Sanctions

The basis for sanctions under CCP §128.7 is a violation of the attorney or party certification requirements. Code of Civil Procedure §128.7 requires that every pleading, petition, written notice of motion, or other similar paper be signed by at least one attorney of record in the attorney's individual name, or if the party is not represented by an attorney, be signed by the party. CCP §128.7(a).

By presenting to the court, whether by signing, filing, submitting, or later advocating, such a pleading, petition, written notice of motion, or other similar paper, an attorney or unrepresented party is certifying that to the best of the person's knowledge, information, and belief, formed after an inquiry reasonable under the circumstances, all of the following conditions are met (CCP §128.7(b)):

- It is not being presented primarily for an improper purpose, such as to harass or to cause unnecessary delay or needless increase in the cost of litigation.
- The claims, defenses, and other legal contentions therein are warranted by existing law or by a nonfrivolous argument for the extension, modification, or reversal of existing law or the establishment of new law.
- The allegations and other factual contentions have evidentiary support or, if specifically so identified, are likely to have evidentiary support after a reasonable opportunity for further investigation or discovery.
- The denials of factual contentions are warranted on the evidence or, if specifically so identified, are reasonably based on a lack of information or belief.

A violation of these representations may be the basis for the court to impose sanctions on the attorneys, law firms, or parties that committed the violation or are responsible for the violation. CCP §128.7(c).

Under CCP §128.7 there are basically three types of submitted papers that warrant sanctions: (1) papers that are factually frivolous (not well grounded in fact); (2) papers that are legally frivolous (not warranted by existing law or a good faith argument for the extension, modification, or reversal of existing law); and (3) papers interposed for an improper purpose. *Guillemín v Stein* (2002) 104 CA4th 156, 167, 128 CR2d 65.

Code of Civil Procedure §128.7 is not applicable to disclosures and discovery requests, responses, objections, and motions. CCP §128.7(g).

*Note:* Because CCP §128.7 so closely tracks Fed R Civ P 11 (as it read in 1994), federal cases interpreting Rule 11 are likely to have some bearing

on interpreting and applying CCP §128.7. See *Guillemin v Stein, supra*, 104 CA4th at 167 (federal case law construing Rule 11 is persuasive authority with regard to meaning of CCP §128.7); *Hart v Avetoom* (2002) 95 CA4th 410, 413, 115 CR2d 511 (in examining provisions of CCP §128.7, California courts may look to federal decisions interpreting federal rule).

A judge may not base an award of sanctions under CCP §128.7 on misconduct by an attorney or party in the proceeding that does not involve a pleading, motion, or other filing. See *Christian v Mattel, Inc.* (9th Cir 2002) 286 F3d 1118, 1129 (in imposing sanctions under Fed R Civ P 11, judge may not consider attorney's discovery abuses or misstatements made during hearing, but only whether complaint was baseless). See also *Truesdell v Southern Cal. Permanente Med. Group* (9th Cir 2002) 293 F3d 1146, 1155 (judge may not consider *other* cases in which plaintiff's counsel had filed frivolous complaints against defendant).

## 2. [§3.53] Person Against Whom Sanctions Award May Be Made

Sanctions under CCP §128.7 cannot be awarded in favor of a party against its own attorney. See *Mark Indus., Ltd. v Sea Captain's Choice, Inc.* (9th Cir 1995) 50 F3d 730, 732 (interpreting Fed R Civ P 11). Monetary sanctions may not be awarded against a party whose attorney asserts frivolous legal contentions in violation of CCP §128.7(b)(2). CCP §128.7(d)(1); *Banks v Hathaway, Perrett, Webster, Powers & Chrisman* (2002) 97 CA4th 949, 952, 118 CR2d 803. Monetary responsibility for such a violation is more properly placed solely on the party's attorney. *Cromwell v Cummings* (1998) 65 CA4th Supp 10, 14 n3, 76 CR2d 171.

However, monetary sanctions may be imposed against a represented party for violating other provisions of CCP §128.7(b), *e.g.*, for presenting a document for an improper purpose, to harass, cause unnecessary delay, or needless increase in the cost of litigation in violation of CCP §128.7(b)(1), for making allegations or other factual contentions lacking evidentiary support in violation of CCP §128.7(b)(3), or for making denials of factual allegations not warranted by the evidence in violation of CCP §128.7(b)(4). *Laborde v Aronson* (2001) 92 CA4th 459, 466-467, 112 CR2d 119 (judge could impose sanctions against both attorney and client under CCP §128.7(b)(1)).

## 3. [§3.54] Duty To Investigate Required by CCP §128.7

*Duty imposed on attorney.* Similar language in Fed R Civ P 11 has been interpreted to impose an affirmative obligation on the part of the attorney (or unrepresented party) to investigate the validity of the legal and factual contentions made in the papers filed by the attorney (or party).

See *Business Guides, Inc. v Chromatic Communications Enters., Inc.* (1991) 498 US 533, 550, 111 S Ct 922, 112 L Ed 2d 1140; *Christian v Mattel, Inc.* (9th Cir 2002) 286 F3d 1118, 1127. The test is an objective one. 286 F3d at 1127. The reasonable person against whom an attorney's conduct is measured is a competent attorney admitted to practice before the court. See *Zaldivar v City of Los Angeles* (9th Cir 1986) 780 F2d 823, 830.

When the complaint is the primary focus of rule 11 proceedings, the court must conduct a two-part inquiry to determine (1) whether the complaint is legally or factually baseless from an objective perspective, and (2) if the attorney has conducted a reasonable and competent inquiry before signing and filing it. *Holgate v Baldwin* (9th Cir 2005) 425 F3d 671, 676; *Christian v Mattel, Inc.*, *supra*, 286 F3d at 1127. The attorney's (or party's) duty to make reasonable inquiry increases in direct proportion to the information available as the litigation proceeds. See *Townsend v Holman Consulting Corp.* (9th Cir 1990) 929 F2d 1358, 1364. Sanctions may not be imposed against an attorney who fails to make a reasonable inquiry about the facts before filing the complaint if after-acquired evidence establishes that the complaint was well-founded. *In re Keegan Mgt. Co.* (9th Cir 1996) 78 F3d 431, 434. When a complaint alleges multiple causes of action, the fact that at least one claim is found not to be frivolous does not preclude the court from awarding sanctions based on other claims in the complaint that are found to be frivolous. *Holgate v Baldwin*, *supra*, 425 F3d at 677. In addition, the fact that an attorney withdraws as counsel due to a conflict of interest does not preclude the court from imposing sanctions against the attorney based on a filing the attorney made before withdrawing. 425 F3d at 677.

The California Supreme Court has held that these provisions apply with respect to the imposition of sanctions under CCP §128.7. It specifically held that both attorneys and their clients have a duty to make a reasonable inquiry before filing papers with the court, and must have an actual belief that the allegations set forth in these papers are true. *Bockrath v Aldrich Chem. Co., Inc.* (1999) 21 C4th 71, 82, 86 CR2d 846. A plaintiff should not file a complaint against a specific named defendant unless, after reasonable inquiry, the plaintiff actually believes that the defendant is liable for the plaintiff's damages. 21 C4th at 82. If the plaintiff lacks sufficient evidence to support particular allegations against a defendant, but believes such evidence is likely to be obtained through further investigation or discovery, the complaint must specifically identify these allegations. 21 C4th at 82.

*Duty imposed on client.* Federal courts interpreting Rule 11 have also held that when the client, rather than the attorney, is in the better position to investigate the facts, the client must make a reasonable inquiry before

providing the facts to the attorney. *Pan-Pacific & Low Ball Cable Television Co. v Pacific Union Co.* (9th Cir 1993) 987 F2d 594, 597.

*Duty to corroborate hearsay information.* Attorneys or unrepresented parties should normally corroborate hearsay information. *Unioil, Inc. v E.F. Hutton & Co.* (9th Cir 1986) 809 F2d 548, 558 (amended, rehearing denied). In that regard, it may not be reasonable for an attorney to rely on newspaper articles. *Garr v U.S. Healthcare, Inc.* (3d Cir 1994) 22 F3d 1274, 1279. If the facts seem unlikely, the attorney must make a reasonable attempt to corroborate them. See *Childs v State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co.* (5th Cir 1994) 29 F3d 1018, 1025.

*Factors in determining whether inquiry was reasonable.* Interpreting Rule 11, the court in *Brown v Federation of State Med. Bds. of the U.S.* (7th Cir 1987) 830 F2d 1429, 1435, noted these factors for the judge to consider in deciding whether the inquiry was reasonable:

- Complexity of the facts.
- Time available for investigating the facts before presenting the pleading or other paper. *Cooter & Gell v Hartmarx Corp.* (1990) 496 US 384, 401-402, 110 S Ct 2447, 110 L Ed 2d 359 (inquiry that is reasonable a few months before complaint must be filed may not be reasonable when there is only a short time before statute of limitations expires).
- Whether another attorney initiated the case.
- Whether and to what extent the attorney was required to rely on the client's statement of the facts.

There are different considerations when the soundness of a legal argument is at issue, although the distinction between law and facts is not always an easy one to find. See *Cooter & Gell v Hartmarx Corp.*, *supra*, 496 US at 401. In determining whether a legal argument is frivolous, the judge should consider these factors (*Brown v Federation of State Med. Bds. of the U.S.*, *supra*, 830 F2d at 1435):

- Complexity of the legal issues.
- Whether an attorney (rather than an unrepresented party) is presenting the legal theory.
- Whether the legal theory is reasonable. In this regard, an attorney must research the law and not merely accept the client's position concerning a legal question. *Hendrix v Naphtal* (9th Cir 1992) 971 F2d 398, 400. See *Guillemín v Stein* (2002) 104 CA4th 156, 167-168, 128 CR2d 65 (sanctions were not warranted when legal contention advanced by party was "arguable"; even though it lacked persuasive force, motion was not frivolous, and party was entitled to zealously argue the point).

- Time available for researching the law.

Under [CCP §128.7](#), an attorney or unrepresented party may be able to show that a legal contention is warranted by either providing current valid authority or by providing support for a contention that existing law should be changed. See [CCP §128.7\(b\)\(2\)](#).

#### 4. [§3.55] Examples of Conduct That May Warrant Sanctions Under CCP §128.7

A judge may impose sanctions under [CCP §128.7](#) for the following types of conduct:

- Against a plaintiff for filing a complaint to which the defendant has a complete defense. See *Laborde v Aronson* (2001) 92 CA4th 459, 463–465, 112 CR2d 119 (litigation privilege of CC §47 established complete defense to all causes of action); *Liberty Mut. Fire Ins. Co. v McKenzie* (2001) 88 CA4th 681, 689–692, 105 CR2d 910 (in insurer’s declaratory relief action to determine coverage, judge properly ordered insured to pay sanctions to insurer for naming claims adjuster employed by insurer as cross-defendant in his cross-complaint against insurer for breach of contract and breach of implied covenant of good faith, in contravention of well-settled law).
- Against a plaintiff after sustaining the defendant’s demurrer without leave to amend. See *Banks v Hathaway, Perrett, Webster, Powers & Chrisman* (2002) 97 CA4th 949, 953–954, 118 CR2d 803 (judge loses jurisdiction to award sanctions only when order sustaining demurrer is reduced to judgment before defendant serves and files sanctions motion).
- Against a plaintiff for filing an amended complaint that is not in accordance with the judge’s order sustaining the defendant’s demurrer with leave to amend. See *Eichenbaum v Alon* (2003) 106 CA4th 967, 971, 131 CR2d 296.
- Against a party for filing a motion for reconsideration that does not comply with the statutory requirements for such a motion. [CCP §1008\(d\)](#); *Deauville Restaurant, Inc. v Superior Court* (2001) 90 CA4th 843, 852, 108 CR2d 863; *Marriage of Drake* (1997) 53 CA4th 1139, 1168–1169, 62 CR2d 466.
- Against an unrepresented plaintiff or a represented plaintiff’s attorney when the defendant is granted summary judgment in an action under the [California Fair Employment and Housing Act \(FEHA\)](#) (Govt C §12900) based on the plaintiff’s failure to exhaust administrative remedies. *Hon v Marshall* (1997) 53 CA4th 470, 478–479, 62 CR2d 11.

- Against a wife for filing a separate action based on claims that were within the jurisdiction of the family court when the dissolution proceeding had been filed before the separate action. *Burkle v Burkle* (2006) 144 CA4th 387, 400, 50 CR3d 436.

Although CCP §128.7(a) states that any unsigned paper “shall be stricken unless omission of the signature is corrected promptly after being called to the attention of the attorney or party,” this does not compel a dismissal, nor does it rule out granting leave to amend. *Vaccaro v Kaiman* (1998) 63 CA4th 761, 767-768, 73 CR2d 829; see *Board of Trustees of Leland Stanford Jr. Univ. v Superior Court* (2007) 149 CA4th 1154, 1167-1170, 57 CR3d 755 (complaint not signed by party may be amended to add signature even after limitations period has run). As long as the omission of counsel’s signature is capable of cure, it is an abuse of discretion for a judge to strike the plaintiff’s complaint without affording leave to amend. *Vaccaro v Kaiman* (1998) 63 CA4th 761, 768-769, 73 CR2d 829. In enacting CCP §128.7, the Legislature did not intend that a judge must dismiss an action when counsel fails to “promptly” sign the complaint, if counsel is willing to do so belatedly. 63 CA4th at 769. There are other alternatives short of dismissal of the plaintiff’s action that are sufficient to enforce the legislative policy of CCP §128.7. For example, a judge has authority under CCP §436 to require, as a condition of leave to amend, that the plaintiff pay the defendant’s expenses of the motion to strike the complaint. 63 CA4th at 769.

Examples of conduct that gave rise to Rule 11 sanctions as interpreted in federal case law (which may have some bearing on interpreting and applying CCP §128.7) include:

- Pursuing lawsuit for copyright infringement against a one-person company operating out of a garage when simple checking would have shown that no infringement had occurred. *Business Guides, Inc. v Chromatic Communications Enters., Inc.* (1991) 498 US 533, 550, 111 S Ct 922, 112 L Ed 2d 1140.
- Causing delay as a result of repeated unjustified procedural moves. *Coastal Transfer Co. v Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A.* (9th Cir 1987) 833 F2d 208, 212.
- Seeking excessive amount of damages. *Hudson v Moore Bus. Forms, Inc.* (9th Cir 1987) 836 F2d 1156, 1162.
- Naming party as a defendant only to establish venue. *Stewart v American Int’l Oil & Gas Co.* (9th Cir 1988) 845 F2d 196, 201.

## 5. [§3.56] Procedural Requirements

A motion for sanctions must be made separately from other motions or requests and must describe the specific conduct alleged to violate



subdivision. CCP §128.7(c)(1); *Barnes v Department of Corrections* (1999) 74 CA4th 126, 135–136, 87 CR2d 594. The moving party must strictly comply with this requirement. 74 CA4th at 135–136 (doctrine of substantial compliance does not apply). Informal notice of an intention to seek sanctions in the future does not serve as a substitute for a formal noticed motion. 74 CA4th at 135–136.

On its own motion, the court may enter an order that describes the specific conduct that appears to violate subdivision and that directs an attorney, law firm, or party to show cause why it is not liable for sanctions, unless, within 21 days of service of the order to show cause, the challenged paper, claim, defense, contention, allegation, or denial is withdrawn or appropriately corrected. CCP §128.7(c)(2).

When imposing sanctions, the court shall describe the conduct determined to constitute a violation of this section and explain the basis for the sanction imposed. CCP §128.7(e).

The required notice of motion and safe harbor provisions are discussed in §3.57.

For a checklist of the CCP §128.7 procedure, see §3.10.

## 6. [§3.57] Safe Harbor Limitations

A party seeking sanctions under CCP §128.7 must serve, but not file, a notice of motion describing the specific conduct that allegedly violated CCP §128.7(b); the motion may not be coupled with any other motion or request. CCP §128.7(c)(1). A party served with the notice of motion seeking sanctions has a safe harbor period of 21 days from that service to withdraw or appropriately correct the challenged paper, claim, defense, contention, allegation or denial; such a withdrawal or correction will render the motion moot. CCP §128.7(c)(1). Thus, the offending party may avoid sanctions altogether by withdrawing or correcting the challenged document. *Hart v Avetoom* (2002) 95 CA4th 410, 413, 115 CR2d 511.

A judge may prescribe a safe harbor period that is shorter or longer than 21 days. CCP §128.7(c)(1).

In addition to withdrawing or correcting the challenged pleading, the offending party must also give notice to the moving party that it has taken that step. *Liberty Mut. Fire Ins. Co. v McKenzie* (2001) 88 CA4th 681, 692, 105 CR2d 910. Absent notice, the moving party has no knowledge that the problem has been resolved and consequently will proceed (as it warned the offending party it would do) with filing the sanctions motion with the court. This requires the unnecessary expenditure of time by the court and the moving party's attorney that could have been avoided if notice had been given. When the offending party fails to give notice (and offers no explanation for that omission), the court has the authority to impose the sanctions requested. 88 CA4th at 692.

If a withdrawal or correction is not made within the 21-day period, the moving party may file the motion. See [CCP §128.7\(c\)\(1\)](#). The moving papers that are filed must be the same papers that were served on the opposing party. *Hart v Avetoom, supra*, 95 CA4th at 414–415.

The 21-day safe harbor limitation also applies to sanctions initiated by the judge. [CCP §128.7\(c\)\(2\)](#); *Levy v Blum* (2001) 92 CA4th 625, 637, 112 CR2d 144; *Barnes v Department of Corrections* (1999) 74 CA4th 126, 131, 87 CR2d 594. Thus, when a judge issues an order to show cause as to why sanctions should not be imposed, the judge must set the matter for hearing at least 21 days after service of the order. *Levy v Blum, supra*, 92 CA4th at 637.

*Time for Service.* Because [CCP §1005\(b\)](#) requires motions to be filed at least 16 court days before the hearing, [CCP §128.7\(c\)\(1\)](#) effectively requires a motion for sanctions to be served at least 43 days before it will be heard (21 days required by [CCP §128.7\(c\)\(1\)](#), plus 16 court days, plus 6 intervening weekend days), unless an order shortening time is obtained. *Cromwell v Cummings* (1998) 65 CA4th Supp 10, 13 n3, 76 CR2d 171; see [CCP §1005\(b\)](#) (court or judge may prescribe shorter time). This 43-day period is further extended under [CCP §1005\(b\)](#) when the notice of motion is served by mail.

*Purpose of Safe Harbor Provisions.* The purpose of the safe harbor provision is to permit an offending party to avoid sanctions by withdrawing the improper pleading during the safe harbor period. *Hart v Avetoom, supra*, 95 CA4th at 413. This permits a party to withdraw questionable pleadings without penalty, thus saving the court and the parties time and money litigating the pleading as well as the sanctions request. [Code of Civil Procedure §128.7](#) sanctions are designed to promote compliance with statutory standards of conduct rather than to be punitive. *Malovec v Hamrell* (1999) 70 CA4th 434, 441, 82 CR2d 712. A judge must deny the motion if the moving party fails to comply with the safe harbor provision of [CCP §128.7\(c\)\(1\)](#). *Marriage of Reese & Guy* (1999) 73 CA4th 1214, 1220 n3, 87 CR2d 339 (safe harbor provision is mandatory); *Goodstone v Southwest Airlines Co.* (1998) 63 CA4th 406, 423–424, 73 CR2d 655 (judge has no authority to disregard the safe harbor requirement); *Cromwell v Cummings* (1998) 65 CA4th Supp 10, 13–14, 76 CR2d 171. See *Holgate v Baldwin* (9th Cir 2005) 425 F3d 671 (sanctions award under Rule 11 must be reversed for failure to comply with safe harbor provision, even if challenged filing is frivolous); *Retail Flooring Dealers of Am., Inc. v Beaulieu of Am., LLC* (9th Cir 2003) 339 F3d 1146, 1151 (allowing party to serve sanctions motion under Rule 11 after time has expired for opposing party to correct or withdraw challenged pleading defeats purpose of safe harbor provision).

*Effect of dismissal.* A judge may not order a plaintiff to pay sanctions to a defendant under [CCP §128.7](#) for bringing an improper action against

the defendant after the plaintiff has dismissed the action. *Hart v Avetoom, supra*, 95 CA4th at 413–415. Allowing a defendant to move for sanctions after the conclusion of the case would defeat the purpose of the safe harbor provision, *i.e.*, to allow the offending party to take remedial action. 95 CA4th at 414–415.

However, a judge may award sanctions under [CCP §128.7](#) against a plaintiff that voluntarily dismisses the action (with or without prejudice) *after* the defendant has filed a motion for sanctions. *Eichenbaum v Alon* (2003) 106 CA4th 967, 975, 131 CR2d 296. In such a case, the defendant moves for sanctions only after the plaintiff has been allowed the 21-day safe harbor period to correct its sanctionable conduct, but has not done so. In these circumstances, the plaintiff’s belated abandonment of the case does not fulfill the deterrent purposes of [CCP §128.7](#), and the policies favoring allowance of sanctions remain notwithstanding the dismissal. 106 CA4th at 975–976. This construction is consistent with [CCP §128.7\(d\)\(2\)](#), which provides that the court may not award monetary sanctions on its own motion unless it has issued an order to show cause before a voluntary dismissal. The plain implication of this language is that a judge may award sanctions if a voluntary dismissal comes *after* a sanctions motion is filed. 106 CA4th at 975–976.

## 7. [§3.58] Sanctions

A sanction imposed is limited to what is sufficient to deter repetition of this conduct or comparable conduct by others similarly situated. The sanction may consist of or include directives of a nonmonetary nature, an order to pay a penalty into court, or if imposed on motion and warranted for effective deterrence, an order directing payment to the movant of some or all of the reasonable attorney’s fees and other expenses incurred as a direct result of the violation. [CCP §128.7\(d\)](#). However monetary sanctions may not be awarded against a represented party for a violation of [CCP §128.7\(b\)\(2\)](#) (claims not warranted by existing law). [CCP §128.7\(d\)\(1\)](#).

Monetary sanctions may also not be awarded on the court’s motion unless the court issues its order to show cause before a voluntary dismissal or settlement of the claims made by or against the party that is, or whose attorneys are, to be sanctioned. [CCP §128.7\(d\)\(2\)](#). See [CALIFORNIA JUDGES BENCHBOOK: CIVIL PROCEEDINGS—BEFORE TRIAL, SECOND EDITION](#) §§17.40–17.45 (Cal CJER 2008).

In addition, the court may assess punitive damages against the plaintiff upon a determination by the court that the plaintiff’s action was an action maintained by a person convicted of a felony against the person’s victim, or the victim’s heirs, relatives, estate, or personal representative, for injuries arising from the acts for which the person was convicted of a felony, and that the plaintiff is guilty of fraud, oppression, or malice in maintaining the action. [CCP §128.7\(f\)](#).

## 8. [§3.59] Sanctions Based on Motion for Sanctions

A motion for sanctions brought by a party or a party's attorney primarily for an improper purpose, such as to harass or to cause unnecessary delay or needless increase in the cost of litigation, is itself subject to a motion for sanctions. The intent of the Legislature is for courts to vigorously use its sanctions authority to deter that improper conduct or comparable conduct by others similarly situated. [CCP §128.7\(h\)](#).

## 9. [§3.60] Attorney's Fees

The award of sanctions may include attorney's fees to the movant. [CCP §128.7\(d\)](#). However, a self-represented attorney who responds to a filing abuse may not recover sanctions under [CCP §128.7](#) in the form of attorney's fees. *Musaelian v Adams* (2009) 45 C4th 512, 516-520, 87 CR3d 475 (expressly disapproves *Laborde v Aronson* (2001) 92 CA4th 459, 112 CR2d 119 and *Abandonato v Coldren* (1995) 41 CA4th 264, 48 CR2d 429, to the extent that they are inconsistent).

## 10. [§3.61] Postjudgment Motion for Sanctions

A judge lacks authority to grant a party's postjudgment motion for sanctions. Such a motion does not comply with the safe harbor provision of [CCP §128.7\(c\)\(1\)](#). *Barnes v Department of Corrections* (1999) 74 CA4th 126, 129-135, 87 CR2d 594. A sanctions motion that is served and filed after the action has been dismissed is also untimely. *Hart v Avetoom* (2002) 95 CA4th 410, 413-415, 115 CR2d 511.

A party must serve any motion for sanctions before the final disposition of the claimed sanctionable conduct in order to give the opposing party an opportunity to correct the allegedly offending conduct and avoid sanctions. 74 CA4th at 130, 132-133, 135. For example, an order sustaining a demurrer without leave to amend does not bar a motion for [CCP §128.7](#) sanctions unless the order is reduced to a judgment before the sanctions motion is served and filed. *Banks v Hathaway, Perrett, Webster, Powers & Chrisman* (2002) 97 CA4th 949, 954, 118 CR2d 803.

If the motion is served before the entry of judgment, and the safe harbor time expires before judgment is entered, the motion can be filed after the judgment is entered. *Day v Collingwood* (2006) 144 CA4th 1116, 1124, 50 CR3d 903.

## 11. [§3.62] Appellate Review

An appeal may be taken from an order or interlocutory judgment directing payment of monetary sanctions by a party or an attorney for a party if the amount exceeds \$5000, other than in a limited civil case. [CCP §904.1\(a\)\(11\), \(12\)](#). But multiple orders for monetary sanctions against different defendants, each under the appealable limit, cannot be

aggregated to reach the threshold level for appeal. *Calhoun v Vallejo City Unified Sch. Dist.* (1993) 20 CA4th 39, 41, 24 CR2d 337.

In a limited civil case, any order directing payment of monetary sanctions is directly appealable. CCP §905.2; *Drum v Superior Court* (2006) 139 CA4th 845, 850–852, 43 CR3d 279; but see *Lim v Silverton* (1997) 61 CA4th Supp 1, 3–4, 72 CR2d 408 (found to be wrongfully decided by *Drum*).

Other than in a limited civil case, an order or judgment awarding sanctions of \$5000 or less may be reviewed after entry of final judgment in the main action or, in the appellate court’s discretion, on petition for an extraordinary writ. CCP §904.1(b).

Appellate courts also routinely review orders *denying* sanctions, even though most cases do not specifically address the issue of whether these orders are appealable. See *Shelton v Rancho Mortgage & Inv. Corp.* (2002) 94 CA4th 1337, 1343, 115 CR2d 82. A postjudgment order denying a request for sanctions is appealable under CCP §904.1(a)(2). 94 CA4th at 1343–1345.

In general, an appeal from a sanctions order may normally only be filed by the attorney who was sanctioned. *20th Century Ins. Co. v Choong* (2000) 79 CA4th 1274, 1276–1277, 94 CR2d 753. However, an attorney’s employer has standing to appeal from a sanctions order imposed on the attorney, while acting in the course and scope of his or her employment, because the employer is required by Lab C §2802 to reimburse its attorney-employee for the amount of the sanctions. 79 CA4th at 1276–1277.

An award of monetary sanctions will only be reversed on a finding that the award was a clear abuse of the judge’s discretion. *Gemini Aluminum Corp. v California Custom Shapes, Inc.* (2002) 95 CA4th 1249, 1262–1263, 116 CR2d 358; *Shelton v Rancho Mortgage & Inv. Corp.*, *supra*, 94 CA4th at 1345–1346.

A consideration of whether imposing sanctions is a violation of due process is inherent in the appellate review of a judge’s exercise of discretion in imposing sanctions. *Winikow v Superior Court* (2000) 82 CA4th 719, 727, 98 CR2d 413.

## H. Other Sanctions

### 1. Violation of Lawful Court Order Under CCP §177.5

#### a. [§3.63] Court’s Authority To Impose Sanctions Payable to Court

*Scope of authority.* A judicial officer may impose reasonable monetary sanctions for any violation of a lawful court order without good cause or substantial justification by a witness, a party, a party’s attorney, or both a party and a party’s attorney. CCP §177.5. See *In re Woodham*

(2001) 95 CA4th 438, 445, 115 CR2d 431 (sanctions properly imposed against Board of Prison Terms for its failure to comply with court orders for processing administrative appeals); *20th Century Ins. Co. v Choong* (2000) 79 CA4th 1274, 1277-1279, 94 CR2d 753 (second sanction imposed for failure to pay first sanction that was imposed for failing to file settlement conference statement); *Laborers' Int'l Union of N. Am., AFL-CIO, Local 89 v El Dorado Landscape Co.* (1989) 208 CA3d 993, 1009, 256 CR 632 (noncompliance with time limits in San Diego County court "fast-track" rules); but see *Winikow v Superior Court* (2000) 82 CA4th 719, 726-727, 98 CR2d 413 (judge abused discretion in imposing sanction on plaintiff's counsel for failure to serve notice of status conference hearing on defendant who had not yet appeared).

Sanctions under CCP §177.5 may be imposed in both civil and criminal cases. *People v Tabb* (1991) 228 CA3d 1300, 1310, 279 CR 480. These sanctions may not be used, however, to curb advocacy before the court (CCP §177.5), or to coerce a settlement (*Barrientos v City of Los Angeles* (1994) 30 CA4th 63, 72, 35 CR2d 520). But if the court imposes a sanction against an attorney, which the attorney fails to pay, the court is not required to attempt to collect the sanction through a writ of execution before it may impose a second sanction against the attorney for failing to comply with the first sanction. *20th Century Ins. Co. v Choong, supra*, 79 CA4th at 1278 (court has right to impose second sanction to compel obedience to its lawful orders).

A judge may impose monetary sanctions under CCP §177.5 against an attorney whose improper exercise of peremptory challenges leads to a mistrial, but only if the judge has admonished the attorney that a repetition of specific conduct will result in a monetary sanction. Such a statement by the judge is tantamount to an order not to repeat the conduct and is sufficient for purposes of CCP §177.5. *People v Muhammad* (2003) 108 CA4th 313, 315, 133 CR2d 308 (without prior admonition, CCP §177.5 would not apply). See *People v Willis* (2002) 27 C4th 811, 821, 118 CR2d 301 (judge, with assent of aggrieved party, may issue appropriate orders short of outright dismissal of remaining jurors, including assessment of sanctions against counsel whose challenges exhibit group bias that are severe enough to guard against a repetition of the improper conduct); *People v Boulden* (2005) 126 CA4th 1305, 1314, 24 CR3d 811 (judge's order at outset of trial threatening imposition of monetary sanctions of up to \$1500 for any violation of *Wheeler* upheld).

Any violation of CCP §206, prohibiting contacting jurors after the conclusion of a criminal case except in specified circumstances, is considered a violation of a lawful court order, and monetary sanctions under CCP §177.5 may be imposed. CCP §206(e).

*Amount of sanctions.* The sanctions may not exceed \$1500 and are payable to the court. CCP §177.5. The amount of the sanctions need not

relate to the actual cost to the court traceable to the violation; the judicial officer has discretion to impose any reasonable amount up to \$1500. *20th Century Ins. Co. v Choong, supra*, 79 CA4th at 1278–1279; *People v Tabb, supra*, 228 CA3d at 1311–1312.

*Code of Civil Procedure §177.5 sanctions combined with other sanctions.* Monetary sanctions payable to the court under [CCP §177.5](#) may be combined with other sanctions, *i.e.*, they may be imposed notwithstanding any other provision of law. See [CCP §§177.5, 1209–1222](#). The violation of a court order may also be punished as contempt ([CCP §178](#)), but the indirect contempt procedure must be used because the violation of an order normally occurs outside the court’s presence. See [CCP §1211](#). It may be easier, however, to impose sanctions under the procedure of [CCP §177.5](#) for the same conduct. For a checklist of the [CCP §177.5](#) sanctions procedure, see [§3.11](#). For a checklist of the indirect contempt procedure, see [§3.8](#). For a discussion of sanctions under [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30](#) for violation of a state rule of court, see [§3.76](#).

*Other sources.* For a discussion of imposing sanctions under [CCP §177.5](#) in various postjudgment proceedings, see [CALIFORNIA JUDGES BENCHBOOK: CIVIL PROCEEDINGS—AFTER TRIAL §§7.5](#) (judgment debtor’s failure to answer written interrogatories), 7.30 (failure to appear for examination), 9.15 (failure to comply with demand for acknowledgment of satisfaction of judgment) (Cal CJER 1998).

#### **b. [§3.64] Procedure**

Sanctions under [CCP §177.5](#) may not be imposed except on notice contained in a party’s moving or responding papers, or on a judge’s own motion after notice and opportunity to be heard. Adequacy of notice is determined on a case-by-case basis. *Seykora v Superior Court* (1991) 232 CA3d 1075, 1081, 283 CR 857. A full evidentiary hearing in which witnesses are called is not required; the scope of the hearing is within the judge’s discretion. 232 CA3d at 1082.

An order imposing sanctions must be in writing and must recite in detail the conduct or circumstances justifying the order. [CCP §177.5](#); *Caldwell v Samuels Jewelers* (1990) 222 CA3d 970, 977, 272 CR 126 (simply stating that there is “good cause appearing” to impose sanctions is insufficient).

For a checklist of the [CCP §177.5](#) procedure, see [§3.11](#). For appellate review of sanctions, see [§3.62](#).

## 2. Expenses Under CCP §396b(b) in Challenging Attorney's Selection of Venue

### a. [§3.65] Court's Authority To Award

A judge has discretion to order payment to the prevailing party of reasonable expenses and attorneys' fees incurred in making or resisting a motion to transfer a case, regardless of that party's entitlement to recover costs of the action. CCP §396b(b). See *Mission Imports, Inc. v Superior Court* (1982) 31 C3d 921, 932, 184 CR 296 (award of expenses and fees upheld; motion clearly lacked legal foundation in case that was brought in one of several counties where venue was proper). As between a party and the party's attorney, expenses and fees are the personal liability of the attorney and not chargeable to the party (CCP §396b(b)), because the attorney is expected to know the venue rules when selecting the venue for an action or moving to have the venue transferred (see *Metzger v Silverman* (1976) 62 CA3d Supp 30, 39, 133 CR 355).

### b. [§3.66] Factors in Awarding; Procedure

A judge must consider the following factors in awarding sanctions under CCP §396b(b): (1) whether an offer to stipulate to a change of venue was reasonably made and rejected, and (2) whether the motion or selection of venue was made in good faith given the facts and law the party making the motion or selecting the venue knew or should have known. CCP §396b(b); *Metzger v Silverman* (1976) 62 CA3d Supp 30, 40, 133 CR 355 (because of attorney-client privilege, court's primary concern will be nature of facts adduced at hearing on motion and counsel's supporting legal argument).

Sanctions may not be imposed except on notice in a party's moving papers, or on a judge's own noticed motion, and after an opportunity to be heard. CCP §396b(b).

Although CCP §396b(b) does not specify order requirements, the judge should include the factual basis for his or her conclusion in a written order.

The plaintiff must pay any attorneys' fees and expenses awarded to the defendant under CCP §396b(b) before transfer of the action. CCP §399; *Moore v Powell* (1977) 70 CA3d 583, 590, 138 CR 914.

For a checklist of the CCP §396b(b) procedure, see §3.12. For appellate review of sanctions, see §3.62.



### 3. Defense Costs Under CCP §1038 in Bad-Faith Tort Claim Proceeding

#### a. [§3.67] When Available; Effect of Request

A judge may award defense costs, including reasonable attorneys' fees, on the motion of a defendant or cross-defendant under certain conditions in any civil proceeding under the [California Tort Claims Act \(Govt C §§815–818.9\)](#) or in any action for express or implied indemnity or for contribution. See [CCP §1038\(a\)](#). The costs are available only when the defendant or cross-defendant is granted relief in a motion for summary judgment, judgment under [CCP §631.8](#), directed verdict, or nonsuit. [CCP §1038\(d\)](#). The defense motion must be made before discharge of the jury or entry of judgment. [CCP §1038\(c\)](#). The purpose of [CCP §1038](#) is to discourage frivolous lawsuits by allowing blameless public entities and other defendants to recover their defense costs. *Hall v Regents of the Univ. of Cal.* (1996) 43 CA4th 1580, 1587, 51 CR2d 387.

Any party requesting relief under [CCP §1038](#) waives any right to seek damages for malicious prosecution. Failure to make the motion, however, does not waive the right to sue for malicious prosecution. [CCP §1038\(c\)](#).

#### b. [§3.68] Procedure

*Defendant's motion.* An award of defense costs under [CCP §1038](#) may not be made except on notice contained in a party's papers ([CCP §1038\(a\)](#)) and after affording the parties an opportunity to be heard. Adequate notice is mandated by the due process clauses of the federal and state constitutions. See *Sole Energy Co. v Hodges* (2005) 128 CA4th 199, 207, 26 CR3d 823; *Marriage of Reese & Guy* (1999) 73 CA4th 1214, 1220, 87 CR2d 339.

A judge may not impose defense costs under [CCP §1038](#) on the judge's own motion because the statute requires that the motion be made by a party. [CCP §1038\(a\)](#).

*Determination of defense motion.* On a defense motion, the judge must determine, at the time of granting the dispositive relief, whether the plaintiff, petitioner, cross-complainant, or intervenor against whom the motion is made brought the proceeding with reasonable cause *and* in the good-faith belief that there was a justifiable controversy under the facts and law that warranted the filing of the proceeding. [CCP §1038\(a\)](#); *Hall v Regents of the Univ. of Cal.* (1996) 43 CA4th 1580, 1585, 51 CR2d 387; *Austin B. v Escondido Union Sch. Dist.* (2007) 149 CA4th 860, 888, 57 CR3d 454. The moving defendant must negate either the plaintiff's good faith or reasonable cause in order to prevail. *Kobzoff v Los Angeles County Harbor/UCLA Med. Ctr.* (1998) 19 C4th 851, 860–863, 80 CR2d 803. See *Salazar v Upland Police Dep't* (2004) 116 CA4th 934, 949, 11 CR3d 22

(although both reasonable cause and good faith must exist to bring action, absence of either condition is sufficient grounds for awarding fees under CCP §1038). Before denying a defendant's CCP §1038 motion, a judge must find that the plaintiff brought the action with a good faith belief in its justifiability and with objective reasonable cause. *Kobzoff v Los Angeles County Harbor/UCLA Med. Ctr.*, *supra*, 19 C4th at 862.

A defendant in whose favor summary judgment is granted in an action under the Tort Claims Act (Govt C §§910–935.7) is entitled to an award of attorney's fees and costs under CCP §1038 if the plaintiff lacked either reasonable cause or a good faith belief that the action was justified. The defendant's motion for fees and costs must be filed at the earliest practical time before entry of judgment and must be heard by the same judge that heard the summary judgment motion unless that judge is unavailable. *Gamble v Los Angeles Dep't of Water & Power* (2002) 97 CA4th 253, 259, 118 CR2d 271.

*What constitutes good faith.* "Good faith" or its absence involves a factual inquiry into the plaintiff's subjective state of mind, *i.e.*, did the plaintiff believe the action was valid and what was the plaintiff's intent in pursuing it? Good faith is linked to a belief in a "justifiable controversy under the facts and law." *Hall v Regents of the Univ. of Cal.*, *supra*, 43 CA4th at 1586. The judge must determine "reasonable cause" objectively on the basis of the facts known to the plaintiff when the action was filed; the judge must decide whether any reasonable attorney would have thought the claim to be tenable. 43 CA4th at 1586; *Austin B. v Escondido Union Sch. Dist.*, *supra*, 149 CA4th at 888 (no theory proffered on which plaintiffs could recover). A plaintiff cannot meet the reasonable cause requirement merely by showing that he or she had no information one way or the other about the existence of an element of the cause of action. *Knight v City of Capitola* (1992) 4 CA4th 918, 933, 6 CR2d 874. Nor does a party meet the reasonable cause requirement by showing that it had a legitimate tactical reason for keeping the defendant in the lawsuit after testimony has established that the defendant did not breach the standard of care. *Hall v Regents of the Univ. of Cal.*, *supra*, 43 CA4th at 1586.

At a minimum, reasonable cause requires that the plaintiff's counsel have some articulable facts to conclude that a particular person or entity should be sued as a defendant. *Carroll v State of California* (1990) 217 CA3d 134, 142, 265 CR 753.

"Brought," as used in CCP §1038(a), encompasses not only the filing but also the continued maintenance of an action. See *Hall v Regents of the Univ. of Cal.*, *supra*, 43 CA4th at 1586; *Curtis v County of Los Angeles* (1985) 172 CA3d 1243, 1252, 218 CR 772. See *Salazar v Upland Police Dep't*, *supra*, 116 CA4th at 950–951 (sufficient evidence of lack of reasonable cause and good faith for continuing plaintiff's lawsuit against

defendant police department after she stipulated there was good cause to arrest her).

*Determination of defense costs.* If the judge determines that the proceeding was not brought in good faith and with reasonable cause, the judge must decide the additional issue of what costs the defendant or cross-defendant reasonably and necessarily incurred in defending the action. [CCP §1038\(a\)](#). “Defense costs” include reasonable attorneys’ fees, expert witness fees, and the expense of the services of experts, advisers, and consultants when reasonably incurred in defending the proceeding. See [CCP §1038\(b\)](#). The costs recoverable under [CCP §1038\(b\)](#) are broader than the costs that are recoverable under [CCP §1032](#), the general costs statute. See *Crib Retaining Walls, Inc. v NBS/Lowry, Inc.* (1996) 47 CA4th 886, 891, 54 CR2d 850. However, dismissed defendants or cross-defendants often seek costs under the narrower [CCP §1032](#) because they will not need to obtain prior court approval or findings that the complaint or cross-complaint was brought in good faith and with reasonable cause. See 47 CA4th at 891 (such defendants or cross-defendants are entitled to costs as matter of right).

For a checklist of [CCP §1038](#) procedure, see [§3.13](#). For appellate review of sanctions, see [§3.62](#).

#### **4. [§3.69] Expenses Under CCP §437c(j) for Bad-Faith Summary Judgment Affidavits**

If a judge determines at any time that any of the affidavits or declarations in support of or in opposition to a motion for summary judgment or summary adjudication were presented in bad faith or solely for purposes of delay, the judge must order the party presenting the affidavits or declarations to pay to the other party the amount of reasonable expenses that party incurred as a result of the filing. See [CCP §437c\(j\)](#). This sanctions provision does not authorize an award of attorney’s fees. It only allows recovery of expenses such as expert witness fees and service fees. *Collins v State Dep’t of Transp.* (2003) 114 CA4th 859, 870, 8 CR3d 132.

Sanctions may not be imposed under [CCP §437c\(j\)](#) except on notice in a party’s papers, or on the judge’s own noticed motion, and after affording an opportunity to be heard. [CCP §437c\(j\)](#).

The court must find several elements to hold an action frivolous or in bad faith: (1) The action must be determined to be without merit; (2) the action is prosecuted for an improper motive, including harassment or delay; or (3) the action indisputably has no merit, where any reasonable attorney would agree that the action is totally and completely without merit. *Winick Corp. v County Sanitation Dist. No. 2* (1986) 185 CA3d 1170, 1176, 230 CR 289.

Denial of a party's summary judgment motion does not preclude a subsequent award of sanctions against the opposing party under CCP §128.5 when the party prevails in a subsequent trial of the action. See *Harris v Rudin, Richman & Appel* (2002) 95 CA4th 1332, 1342-1344, 116 CR2d 552 (defendant filed motions for reconsideration, to vacate judgment, and for new trial that only repeated arguments judge had rejected in granting plaintiff summary judgment); *Bond v Pulsar Video Prods.* (1996) 50 CA4th 918, 923, 57 CR2d 917 (judge properly awarded sanctions on finding that plaintiff's claim was frivolous, without foundation, and in bad faith; declarations sufficient to create triable issue of fact on summary judgment motion were revealed to be spurious at trial).

A judge may award monetary sanctions under CCP §2033.420 to reimburse a defendant who prevails on its summary judgment motion for expenses incurred because the plaintiff failed to admit specified facts in requests for admissions propounded by the defendant when the defendant later proves these facts on the summary judgment motion. *Barnett v Penske Truck Leasing Co.* (2001) 90 CA4th 494, 495, 498-499, 108 CR2d 821.

For a checklist of CCP §437c(j) procedure, see §3.14. For appellate review of sanctions, see §3.62.

## 5. Sanctions Under CCP §473(c) on Relief From Default

### a. [§3.70] Monetary Penalty

A judge who grants relief under CCP §473(b) from a default, a default judgment, or a dismissal resulting from attorney mistake, inadvertence, surprise, or neglect, may impose a penalty against the offending attorney of up to \$1000. CCP §473(c)(1)(A). If the client is at fault, the judge may impose the penalty against the client. CCP §473(c)(1)(A). Judges are most likely to impose a penalty in a case of positive misconduct by the attorney or when the attorney has not been candid with the court in the moving papers and supporting affidavit.

The statute does not specify to whom the penalty is to be paid. Judges have made orders requiring payment to the court as well as to the opposing party, *e.g.*, when the court has incurred significant expenses for hearings missed by the offending attorney.

For a checklist of CCP §473(c) procedure, see §3.15. For appellate review of sanctions, see §3.62.

### b. [§3.71] Notice to State Bar

If the sanctions imposed against an attorney total \$1000 or more, the judge must notify the State Bar. Bus & P C §6086.7(c). The court may also order the offending attorney to pay up to \$1000 to the State Bar Client

Fund. CCP §473(c)(1)(B). A judge might impose such a penalty if the attorney's conduct has been particularly egregious, *e.g.*, if this conduct amounts to an abandonment of the client or a breach of the fiduciary duty owed to the client.

**c. [§3.72] Granting Other Appropriate Relief**

The judge may also grant other appropriate relief. CCP §473(c)(1)(C). A judge might issue an “issue preclusion” or “fact preclusion” order in an appropriate case. If evidence was lost or destroyed during the delay, the judge might require the parties to stipulate what this evidence would have shown. The judge might require the parties to comply with an expedited discovery schedule and might set an early trial date for the case.

Imposing these sanctions is a form of punishment and is to be distinguished from the judge's authority under CCP §473(b) to impose conditions on the granting of relief from default. *Kodiak Films, Inc. v Jensen* (1991) 230 CA3d 1260, 1264, 281 CR 728.

In appropriate cases, a judge has the authority to impose sanctions under CCP §128.7 in connection with a motion for relief from default. See §3.10.

**d. [§3.73] Statement of Reasons for Imposing Sanctions**

A judge must provide a written statement of the reasons for imposing monetary sanctions against a defendant as a condition of granting relief from default. *Hearst v Ferrante* (1987) 189 CA3d 201, 204, 234 CR 385. When a judge conditions relief on the defendant's payment of sanctions, the default or default judgment remains in effect until the sanctions are paid. *Howard v Thrifty Drug & Discount Stores* (1995) 10 C4th 424, 439 n5, 41 CR2d 362.

**e. [§3.74] Payment of Opposing Party's Attorneys' Fees and Costs**

If the judge grants the motion based on an attorney's affidavit of fault, the judge must direct the attorney to pay reasonable compensatory legal fees and costs to the opposing party or the opposing party's attorney. CCP §473(b); *Avila v Chua* (1997) 57 CA4th 860, 869, 67 CR2d 373 (dismissal case); *Metropolitan Serv. Corp. v Casa de Palms, Ltd.* (1995) 31 CA4th 1481, 1488, 37 CR2d 575 (default case). When the motion is not based on an attorney's affidavit of fault, a judge has the discretion to order the offending party to pay the opposing party's reasonable attorneys' fees and costs. See *Daley v County of Butte* (1964) 227 CA2d 380, 395–396, 38 CR 693 (judge may afford relief “upon any terms as may be just”).

**f. [§3.75] Attorney’s Failure To Comply With Sanctions Order**

A judge’s order granting relief on the basis of an attorney’s affidavit of fault may not be made conditional on the attorney’s payment of any fees, costs, or other monetary penalties imposed by the judge, or on compliance with other sanctions ordered by the judge. [CCP §473\(c\)\(2\)](#). If the attorney fails to comply with the judge’s order to pay fees, costs, or other monetary penalties, the judge may impose sanctions under [CCP §177.5](#) or [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30](#) for failure to comply with the order or may hold the attorney in contempt under [CCP §1209\(a\)\(5\)](#).

**6. [§3.76] Sanctions Under Cal Rules of Ct 2.30 for Violation of Judicial Council Rules**

A judge may order a person who fails to comply with a Judicial Council rule to pay reasonable monetary sanctions to the court or an aggrieved person, or both, unless good cause is shown. [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30\(a\), \(b\)](#). See [Cal Rules of Ct 3.220\(c\)](#) (judge may impose sanctions under [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30](#) against party and/or party’s attorney for failing to file cover sheet with first paper being filed). For purposes of this rule, the term “person” means a party, a party’s attorney, or a witness, and an insurer or any other individual or entity whose consent is necessary for resolution of the case. [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30\(b\)](#).

Sanctions may not be imposed except on notice in a party’s motion papers or on the court’s own motion after the court has provided notice and an opportunity to be heard. [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30\(c\)](#). A party’s motion must set forth the rule that has been violated; describe the specific conduct that is alleged to have violated the rule; and identify the attorney, law firm, party, or witness against whom sanctions are sought. [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30\(c\)](#). The court on its own motion may issue an order to show cause that sets forth the rule that has been violated; describes the particular conduct that appears to have violated the rule; and directs the attorney, law firm, party, or witness to show cause why sanctions should not be imposed for violation of the rule. [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30\(c\)](#). Before sanctions may be imposed, due process requires that a hearing must be held to determine whether an offense was committed; it is not sufficient to hold a hearing solely on the issue of the amount of the sanctions. See *Bergman v Rifkind & Sterling, Inc.* (1991) 227 CA3d 1380, 1387, 278 CR 583.

The sanctions order must be in writing and must specify the conduct or circumstances justifying the imposition of sanctions. [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30\(e\)](#); *Caldwell v Samuels Jewelers* (1990) 222 CA3d 970, 978, 272 CR 126. If the failure to comply with an applicable rule was the responsibility of the attorney, not the party, sanctions may only be imposed on the attorney and may not adversely affect the party’s cause of action or

defense. [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30\(b\)](#). In addition to ordering the sanctioned party to pay reasonable monetary sanctions to the court and/or an aggrieved party, the court may order the sanctioned party to pay the aggrieved party's reasonable expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees and costs, incurred in connection with the sanctions motion or order to show cause. [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30\(d\)](#).

An order imposing a monetary sanction payable to a party has the effect of a money judgment. See *Newland v Superior Court* (1995) 40 CA4th 608, 615, 47 CR2d 24. Unless there is a stay of the sanction, the order is directly enforceable through issuance of a writ of execution. See *Newland v Superior Court*, *supra*.

If the sanctions imposed against an attorney total \$1000 or more, the judge must notify the State Bar. [Bus & P C §6086.7\(c\)](#).

For a checklist of [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30](#) procedure, see [§3.16](#). For appellate review of sanctions, see [§3.62](#).

## **7. Sanctions for Violations of Local Court Rules Under CCP §575.2**

### **a. [§3.77] Types of Sanctions That May Be Imposed**

Local rules adopted under [CCP §575.1](#) may authorize a variety of sanctions against parties or attorneys who disobey them. The court may ([CCP §575.2\(a\)](#)):

- Strike out all or any part of any pleading of that party;
- Dismiss the action or proceeding or any part thereof;
- Enter a judgment by default against that party;
- Impose other penalties of a lesser nature as otherwise provided by law; or
- Order a party or his or her counsel to pay to the moving party the reasonable expenses in making the motion, including reasonable attorney fees.

For example, a judge may impose monetary sanctions against a plaintiff's attorney for violating the court's local rule governing participation in judicial arbitration proceedings, based on the attorney's failure to have the plaintiff appear at the arbitration hearing or to be available by telephone, and on the attorney's failure to produce any evidence at the hearing in support of the plaintiff's claims. *Rietveld v Rosebud Storage Partners, L.P.* (2004) 121 CA4th 250, 254-257, 16 CR3d 791.

A court's power to impose sanctions on participants in proceedings before it for violation of the court's local rules is not affected by the filing of a bankruptcy proceeding by one of those participants. *Keitel v Heubel*

(2002) 103 CA4th 324, 334–336, 126 CR2d 763 (automatic stay does not preclude court from imposing sanctions on party or attorney for violating court rules).

Although authorized to impose sanctions for violation of local rules (CCP §575.2(a)), a judge should avoid treating a curable violation of local procedural rules as the basis for crippling a litigant’s ability to present his or her case. *Elkins v Superior Court* (2007) 41 C4th 1337, 63 CR3d 483 (court improperly refused to allow pro per litigant to present case by personal testimony relying on invalid local rule).

**b. [§3.78] Conflict with State Law**

A trial court may not adopt local rules or procedures that conflict with statutes or with rules of court adopted by the Judicial Council, or that are inconsistent with the constitution or case law. *Elkins v Superior Court* (2007) 41 C4th 1337, 63 CR3d 483 (court found that local rules requiring affidavits in dissolution cases violated state law and reversed sanctions based thereon); *Boyle v CertainTeed Corp.* (2006) 137 CA4th 645, 655, 40 CR3d 501 (local courts cannot shorten the statutory notice period or alter standards for producing evidence for summary judgment hearings); *Hock v Superior Court* (1990) 221 CA3d 670, 673–674, 270 CR 579 (invalidating local fast track rule under which counsel could not be substituted subsequent to trial setting conference without court’s approval).

**c. [§3.79] When Sanctions Should Be Imposed on Attorney, Not Party**

Code of Civil Procedure §575.2(b) forbids the use of sanctions to adversely affect a party’s case when noncompliance with local rules is attributable solely to counsel. See *Estate of Meeker* (1993) 13 CA4th 1099, 1104, 16 CR2d 825 (failure to file joint trial statement). Before imposing sanctions that adversely affect a party’s cause of action or defense, a judge must hold a fact-finding hearing to determine culpability. See *State ex rel Public Works Bd. v Bragg* (1986) 183 CA3d 1018, 228 CR 576.

It was an abuse of discretion for a judge to dismiss a plaintiff’s complaint as a sanction for the plaintiff’s failure to appear at trial because the plaintiff was out of the country for medical treatment. *Link v Cater* (1998) 60 CA4th 1315, 1322–1326, 71 CR2d 130. The plaintiff had complied with all court rules and prior orders, prosecuted the case diligently, and scheduled the medical treatment before receiving notice of the date to which the trial had been continued. A less severe sanction than termination, such as a monetary sanction, would have been appropriate. 60 CA4th at 1322–1326.



#### d. [§3.80] Requirements for Local Rules

The court may not dismiss an action based on the plaintiff's failure to comply with local delay reduction standards that have not been adopted as court rules. See *Simmons v City of Pasadena* (1995) 40 CA4th Supp 1, 5, 47 CR2d 102. In addition, a judge may not impose sanctions under a local court rule that sets lower procedural standards and affords less due process protection than CCP §128.7. See *Pacific Trends Lamp & Lighting Prods., Inc. v J. White, Inc.* (1998) 65 CA4th 1131, 1135–1136, 76 CR2d 918.

A judge had no authority to impose monetary sanctions on an attorney for violating a local court rule prohibiting ex parte communications on the substance of a pending case with a judge or the judge's clerk, when the attorney's communication was with a court clerk to set a date for a status conference without informing opposing counsel. *Blum v Republic Bank* (1999) 73 CA4th 245, 248–249, 86 CR2d 226.

#### e. [§3.81] Sanctioning Pro Per Litigants

Because pro per litigants are entitled to the same, but no greater, rights than represented litigants and are presumed to know delay reduction rules, they may be sanctioned for failure to comply with delay reduction rules or court orders under CCP §575.2, Cal Rules of Ct 2.30, and local rules (see, e.g., Los Angeles Super Ct Rule 7.13). These sanctions may include terminating sanctions, such as the striking of pleadings. *Wantuch v Davis* (1995) 32 CA4th 786, 795, 39 CR2d 47. However, a judge may not order terminating sanctions as a first response when noncompliance is through no fault of the party. 32 CA4th at 795 (failure to appear resulted from party's imprisonment).

#### f. [§3.82] Procedure

A judge must give a party prior notice and an opportunity to be heard before imposing sanctions under CCP §575.2 for the party's failure to comply with the court's local rules. CCP §575.2(a).

- **JUDICIAL TIP:** A written court order should be prepared. Best practice is to avoid stating conclusions in the words of the statute. Give a factual recital, with reasonable specificity, of the circumstances leading to the order. If desired, incorporate by reference portions of a party's papers that adequately set forth the conduct, circumstances, and legal arguments providing the bases for the court's conclusions.

If the sanctions imposed against an attorney total \$1000 or more, the judge must notify the State Bar. Bus & P C §6086.7(c).

For a checklist of CCP §575.2 procedure, see §3.17. For appellate review of sanctions, see §3.62.

## 8. Sanctions Sought Under Delay Reduction Rules

### a. [§3.83] Court's Authority To Award

Judges who are assigned cases under the [Trial Court Delay Reduction Act](#) ([Govt C §§68600–68620](#)) have all the powers to impose sanctions that are authorized by law and are encouraged to impose sanctions in order to achieve delay reduction. [Govt C §68608\(b\)](#). See also [Govt C §§68605.5, 68608\(a\)](#) (delay reduction automatically applies to actions and proceedings in superior courts except for cases assigned to juvenile, domestic relations, or probate courts, or to a judge for all purposes based on subject matter). Under the Act, judges have the power to dismiss actions or strike pleadings if it appears that less severe sanctions would be ineffective, after taking into account the effect of previously imposed sanctions or earlier failure to comply. [Govt C §68608\(b\)](#).

### b. [§3.84] Imposition of Sanctions Under Local Rule That Conflicts With Statute or Rule of Court

Judges also have the general power to impose sanctions for violations of local court rules ([CCP §575.2](#)), as discussed in [§3.77](#). [Code of Civil Procedure §575.2\(b\)](#) provides that if a failure to comply with the local rules is the fault of the attorney, the party should not be penalized by having the case dismissed. This conflicts with [Govt C §68608\(b\)](#), which authorizes judges to dismiss cases as a sanction for refusal to follow local delay reduction rules when less severe sanctions would be ineffective. The California Supreme Court resolved this conflict in [Garcia v McCutchen](#) (1997) 16 C4th 469, 66 CR2d 319, in which it held that [Govt C §68608\(b\)](#) is subject to the limitations of [CCP §575.2\(b\)](#) and does not establish a separate sanctioning power. A judge is prohibited by [CCP §575.2\(b\)](#) from dismissing a plaintiff's action for the failure of the plaintiff's attorney to comply with local delay reduction rules. 16 C4th at 474–480.

For example, a judge may not dismiss a plaintiff's complaint for failure to meet a local delay reduction rule requiring service of the summons within 60 days of the filing of the complaint. In [Tliche v Van Quathem](#) (1998) 66 CA4th 1054, 1062, 78 CR2d 458, the judge failed to consider less drastic measures than dismissal as a first sanction and failed to take into account that service of process is ordinarily within the attorney's, not the client's, power. There was no evidence of prior sanctions against either the plaintiff or counsel, or any evidence that the plaintiff was responsible for the delay in service of the summons. The sanction for failure to accomplish service within the 60-day period should, in the first instance, have been assessed against the attorney in the form of monetary sanctions, not against the plaintiff by dismissing the case. 66 CA4th at 1061.

A judge abuses his or her discretion by using a violation of a local delay reduction rule to dismiss a case or force a more expeditious resolution after the parties conditionally settle the action and file a notice of settlement with the court under Judicial Council rules. *Interinsurance Exch. v Faura* (1996) 44 CA4th 839, 844, 52 CR2d 199. The state rule of court prevails over a local delay reduction rule. 44 CA4th at 843. Similarly, a local court rule that required counsel to meet and confer before filing most motions and that imposed sanctions for a failure to do so could not properly be applied to a party's motion for a new trial. *Code of Civil Procedure §§656-662.5* specify detailed procedures for such a motion, and a party that complies with these procedures has a statutory right to have the motion considered. A judge has no authority to impose sanctions against a party who complies with these procedures but fails to comply with additional restrictions imposed by the court. *Pacific Trends Lamp & Lighting Prods., Inc. v J. White, Inc.* (1998) 65 CA4th 1131, 1134-1135, 76 CR2d 918.

### c. [§3.85] Procedure

There is no particular procedure for imposing sanctions under “fast-track” local rules. However, these types of sanctions are subject to the same due process constraints as any other type of sanctions, *i.e.*, a judge may impose sanctions only after giving the party notice and an opportunity to be heard. See *Reid v Balter* (1993) 14 CA4th 1186, 1193-1194, 18 CR2d 287 (order dismissing plaintiffs' action for failure to appear at status conference was void because plaintiffs were not given notice that action would be dismissed if they failed to appear).

- **JUDICIAL TIP:** A written court order should be prepared. Best practice is to avoid stating conclusions in the words of the statute. Give a factual recital, with reasonable specificity, of the circumstances leading to the order. If desired, incorporate by reference portions of a party's papers that adequately set forth the conduct, circumstances, and legal arguments providing the bases for the court's conclusions.

If the sanctions imposed against an attorney total \$1000 or more, the judge must notify the State Bar. *Bus & P C §6086.7(c)*.

For appellate review of sanctions, see §3.62.

## 9. Sanctions Sought in Family Law Proceedings

### a. Sanctions Under Fam C §3027.1 for False Accusation of Child Abuse or Neglect

#### (1) [§3.86] Court’s Authority To Award

If a judge determines, based on an investigation conducted under Fam C §3027 or other evidence presented, that an accusation of child abuse or neglect made during a child custody proceeding was false and the accuser knew it to be false, the judge may impose both reasonable sanctions not to exceed costs incurred in defending against the accusation and reasonable attorneys’ fees expended in recovering the sanctions against the accuser. This remedy is in addition to any other remedy provided by law. Fam C §3027.1(a), (c).

#### (2) [§3.87] Procedure

On motion by the person requesting sanctions under Fam C §3027.1, the judge must issue an order to show cause (OSC) why the sanctions should not be granted. Fam C §3027.1(b). The OSC must be served on the person against whom sanctions are sought, and a hearing on the OSC must be scheduled to be conducted at least 15 days after the order is served. Fam C §3027.1(b). A court properly ignored a request for sanctions made in a written closing argument when the request had never been served on the party from whom the sanctions were sought. *Niko v Foreman* (2006) 144 CA4th 344, 369, 50 CR3d 398. The “person” requesting sanctions or against whom sanctions are sought includes a party, a party’s attorney, or a witness. Fam C §3027.1(a). See §3.18.

A request for sanctions under Fam C §3027.1 does not require a finding of falsity during the underlying temporary custody proceeding. *Marriage of Dupre* (2005) 127 CA4th 1517, 1525–1527, 26 CR3d 328. The statute requires that the false statement be made during the child custody proceeding but does not require the falsity to be established during that proceeding. To require falsity to be established before issuing an OSC would render the OSC superfluous. 127 CA4th at 1527.

An order dismissing a party’s request for sanctions is appealable under CCP §904.1(a)(2). 127 CA4th at 1523–1525.

For a checklist of Fam C §3027.1 procedure, see §3.18. For appellate review of sanctions, see §3.62.

### b. Sanctions Under Fam C §271 for Frustrating Settlement of Family Law Cases

#### (1) [§3.88] Court’s Authority To Award

A judge may base an award of attorneys’ fees and costs (in the nature of a sanction) on the extent to which each party’s or attorney’s conduct

either promotes or thwarts the general policy of reaching settlements and reducing litigation costs. *Fam C §271(a)*; *Marriage of Freeman* (2005) 132 CA4th 1, 5, 33 CR3d 237; *Marriage of Petropoulos* (2001) 91 CA4th 161, 177, 110 CR2d 111. See *Marriage of Mason* (1996) 46 CA4th 1025, 1028, 54 CR2d 263 (sanctions awarded for filing frivolous appeal of parties' settlement).

*Family Code §271* does not require that the conduct be frivolous or taken solely for the purpose of delay; such conduct, however, may be sanctioned under this section. *Marriage of Freeman, supra*, 132 CA4th at 6. The party seeking sanctions is not required to establish that the conduct on which the sanctions are based caused harm or that the party has sought other procedural remedies. *Marriage of Feldman* (2007) 153 CA4th 1470, 1479-1480, 64 CR3d 29 (sanctions for failure to disclose assets).

Merely refusing to compromise will not warrant sanctions. *Marriage of Aninger* (1990) 220 CA3d 230, 245, 269 CR 388 (failure of husband's counsel to respond to two letters inviting settlement discussions on support modification and refusal to compromise on support and property division issues were not so blameworthy to warrant sanctions under former CC §4370.6, now *Fam C §271*). However, sanctions in the form of attorneys' fees have been found to be warranted under former CC §4370.5 in the following cases:

- Wife brought several claims against husband in order to harass him during lengthy and protracted dissolution proceedings. *Marriage of Norton* (1988) 206 CA3d 53, 59, 253 CR 354.
- Husband (who was own attorney) submitted an incomprehensible brief, filed most of the 12 appeals in this case, and delayed in paying portions of the judgment. *Marriage of Green* (1989) 213 CA3d 14, 29, 261 CR 294.
- Husband's conduct manifested "a deliberate attempt to exhaust [wife] financially and emotionally and deny her effective counsel" (husband had sued wife's attorney for malicious prosecution and had brought many different family law proceedings). *Marriage of Green* (1992) 6 CA4th 584, 589, 7 CR2d 872 (same parties as above).

Attorney's fees as sanctions were properly awarded to a husband when the wife brought a separate action to enforce an alleged order made in the dissolution proceeding. The separate action was improper because the family law court had jurisdiction in the dissolution proceeding. *Burkle v Burkle* (2006) 144 CA4th 387, 399, 50 CR3d 436. A judge properly imposed attorney's fees as sanctions against a former wife, making payment contingent on her failure to pay her share of federal income taxes in accordance with the terms of the dissolution judgment. The wife and her attorneys had engaged in a series of stratagems to avoid the

consequence of their initial failure to contest the 50–50 division of tax liabilities and their agreement to file a joint return. *Marriage of Hargrave* (1995) 36 CA4th 1313, 1323, 43 CR2d 474.

In a dissolution proceeding to resolve competing claims of the first and second wives of a deceased man to his retirement benefits, the judge properly imposed additional sanctions under Fam C §271 in favor of the second wife when the judge denied the first wife's motion for reconsideration of a prior sanctions order imposed against her for her failure to appear at the hearing. *Marriage of Burgard* (1999) 72 CA4th 74, 82, 84 CR2d 739. The judge did not abuse his discretion in imposing additional sanctions, because the first wife's prior conduct had resulted in an earlier sanctions award and her motion for reconsideration did not present any new or different facts. The second wife was obligated to respond to an unnecessary motion.

Sanctions including attorney's fees were properly awarded when the husband failed to disclose marital assets in a dissolution proceeding. *Marriage of Feldman, supra*, 153 CA4th at 1480.

Although the family court has power to impose sanctions on a party whose misrepresentations required litigation to undo any agreement or judgment, that power is limited to awarding attorneys' fees and costs under Fam C §271(a). The court has no power to award punitive damages. *Dale v Dale* (1998) 66 CA4th 1172, 1186, 78 CR2d 513.

## (2) [§3.89] Procedure

An award of fees and costs as a sanction may not be imposed without notice to the party who may be sanctioned and an opportunity for that party to be heard. Fam C §271(b); *Marriage of Petropoulos* (2001) 91 CA4th 161, 178, 110 CR2d 111 (record indicated wife was well aware she was subject to sanctions even if trial court did not expressly say so).

The statute does not specify the nature of the hearing that is contemplated. Although an opportunity to be heard must be given, it does not necessarily mean that an oral hearing is required. 91 CA4th at 178–179.

In awarding sanctions under Fam C §271, the judge must consider all evidence concerning the parties' incomes, assets, and liabilities. Fam C §271(a). See §3.1. While the judge may impose sanctions under this section in the absence of a demonstration of financial need by the requesting party, the judge may not impose an unreasonable financial burden on the sanctioned party. Fam C §271(a); *Marriage of Hublou* (1991) 231 CA3d 956, 964, 282 CR 695.

An award of attorney's fees as sanctions may be made before the end of the lawsuit. Such an award during the litigation may encourage cooperation in the remainder of the proceedings. *Marriage of Feldman* (2007) 153 CA4th 1470, 1495, 64 CR3d 29.

An award of fees and costs as sanctions under [Fam C §271](#) is payable only from the property or income of the sanctioned party or that party's share of the community property. [Fam C §271\(c\)](#).

For a checklist of [Fam C §271](#) procedure, see [§3.19](#). For appellate review of sanctions, see [§3.62](#).

### c. [\[§3.90\]](#) Other Sanctions in Family Law Proceedings

If the judge finds that the income and expense declaration filed by the party responding to a motion to modify or terminate a support order is incomplete, inaccurate, or not submitted in good faith, or if the party has not attached the previous year's tax returns, the judge may order sanctions for payment of costs of the motion, including costs of depositions and subpoenas. [Fam C §3667](#). Sanctions may also be imposed under [CCP §128.7](#) (violation of pleading certification requirements; see [§3.52](#)) in family law proceedings. See, e.g., *Burkle v Burkle* (2006) 144 CA4th 387, 400, 50 CR3d 436. Many judges also impose sanctions under [CCP §177.5](#), [Cal Rules of Ct 2.30](#), or under local rules in family law cases for violations of court rules. See [§3.88](#).

## 10. Sanctions Under Court's Inherent Power

### a. [\[§3.91\]](#) Terminating Sanctions

In a case of first impression, the second district held that a trial court has the inherent power to dismiss a case when a plaintiff's misconduct is deliberate and egregious and makes any sanction other than dismissal inadequate to ensure a fair trial. *Stephen Slesinger, Inc. v Walt Disney Co.* (2007) 155 CA4th 736, 740, 66 CR3d 268. It noted a court's inherent power to dismiss for unreasonable, inexcusable delay in prosecution or to dismiss cases that are fraudulent or vexatious. And it recognized that California courts having the power to dismiss for deliberate and egregious misconduct when no other remedy can restore fairness is consistent with the weight of authority from the federal and other state courts. 155 CA4th at 760–761.

### b. [\[§3.92\]](#) Limitations

A judge generally may not require a party whose conduct is being sanctioned to pay the other party's attorney's fees unless an award of attorney's fees is expressly authorized by the statute that makes the conduct sanctionable. *Bauguess v Paine* (1978) 22 C3d 626, 634–637, 150 CR 461. The following statutes specifically authorize an award of attorney's fees as sanctions: [CCP §§128.7](#) (for a violation of certification requirements), [396b](#) (challenging venue), [473\(b\)](#) (relief from default based on attorney's affidavit of fault), [575.2](#) (for a violation of local court rules), [1038](#) (bad faith tort claims), [2023.030\(a\)](#) (for a discovery violation); [Fam](#)

C §271 (frustrating family law settlement). See also Cal Rules of Ct 2.30(d) (authorizing award of attorney’s fees incurred in connection with motion or order to show cause based on opponent’s failure to comply with Judicial Council rule); *Bryan v Bank of Am.* (2001) 86 CA4th 185, 192–199, 103 CR2d 148 (appellate court has inherent authority under former Cal Rules of Ct 27(e)(1) (now Cal Rules of Ct 8.276(e)(1)) to impose attorney’s fees as sanctions for factual misrepresentations to court and violations of court rules); *Dana Commercial Credit Corp. v Ferns & Ferns* (2001) 90 CA4th 142, 146–147, 108 CR2d 278 (appellate court has inherent authority to impose sanctions for filing of frivolous motion on appeal).

A judge may, in the exercise of inherent equitable powers granted by CCP §128(a)(4) and (5), award attorney’s fees without statutory authorization, but only in very limited circumstances, e.g., in favor of a person who preserves a common fund or who acts as a private attorney general to further an important public policy. *Bauguess v Paine, supra*, 22 C3d at 636. Awarding attorney’s fees as sanctions, without statutory authorization, undermines the adversary system. If the objective is to punish misconduct, there is ample power to punish the offender for contempt. 22 C3d at 638; see *Trans-Action Commercial Investors, Ltd. v Firmaterr, Inc.* (1997) 60 CA4th 352, 371–372, 70 CR2d 449 (judge may not impose attorney’s fees as sanction for violation of court rule unless such award is authorized by statute; judge could have held attorney in contempt for repeated violations of judge’s orders).

Similarly, a judge does not have inherent authority under CCP §128(a)(4) and (5) to order a party or an attorney, as a sanction, to pay a fee or cost that is not authorized by statute. See *Andrews v Superior Court* (2000) 82 CA4th 779, 781–783, 98 CR2d 426 (judge lacked inherent authority to require plaintiff’s attorney to pay plaintiff’s share of discovery referee’s fee as a sanction; judge might have had statutory authority to impose such a sanction under former CCP §§2023 and 2031, now CCP §§2023.010–2023.040, 2031.300–2031.320).

## V. SAMPLE FORMS

### A. [§3.93] Written Form: Order To Show Cause in re Contempt

[Title of court]

[Title of case]

NO. \_\_\_\_\_

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE  
IN RE CONTEMPT

To: \_\_\_\_\_



YOU ARE HEREBY ORDERED to appear before the above-entitled court in Department \_\_\_\_\_, located at \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, California, on [date], at \_\_\_\_\_ .m., to show cause, if any, why you should not be adjudged guilty of contempt of court, and punished accordingly, for the acts of willful disobedience of the order of the above-entitled court, as provided in [section 1209\(a\)\(5\) of the California Code of Civil Procedure](#), and as more fully described in the attached [declaration/affidavit/statement] of \_\_\_\_\_. The declaration is attached and by this reference incorporated as though fully set forth, and a copy of the declaration shall be served on you with a copy of this order.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Judge of the Superior Court

**B. [§3.94] Written Form: Statement of Facts of Commissioner or Referee**

[Title of court]

[Title of case]

NO. \_\_\_\_\_

STATEMENT OF FACTS IN RE  
CONTEMPT OF \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, state as follows:

1. I am [specify judicial office, e.g., Commissioner] of the Superior Court, \_\_\_\_\_ County, California.

[Alternative 1, for direct or hybrid contempt]

2. On [date], in the case of \_\_\_\_\_, Case No. \_\_\_\_\_, [while serving as temporary judge on stipulation of the parties under [Article VI, section 21 of the California Constitution](#),] in the immediate view and presence of the court, the alleged contemner [did/said] the following: [Describe in detail the conduct or words constituting contempt].

3. On [date], before committing the conduct described in Paragraph 2, the alleged contemner was warned that the conduct, if continued, would constitute contempt. Despite this warning, the alleged contemner continued the conduct warned against, as follows: [Describe conduct].

4. Contemner was cited for contempt on [date], for the conduct described above.

[Alternative 2, for indirect contempt]

2. On [date], in the case of \_\_\_\_\_, Case No. \_\_\_\_\_, [while serving as temporary judge on stipulation of the parties under Article VI, section 21 of the California Constitution,] I gave the following order or direction to contemner, who was told that violation of that order or direction would be contempt of court: [Set forth order given].

A copy of the order was entered in the record of this court and served on contemner on [date].

3. On [date], contemner willfully and contemptuously failed to perform the order or direction, as follows: [Describe willful and contemptuous failure].

Contemner was cited for contempt for this failure on [date].

4. Contemner had the power to perform the order or direction at the time it was given on [date], and contemner continues to have the power to perform the order or direction.

[Continue for all contempt]

5. Because of the willful and contemptuous act described in this statement, contemner should be adjudged guilty of contempt and sentenced appropriately under the provisions of sections 1211-1222 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Commissioner of the Superior Court

**C. [§3.95] Written Form: Order and Judgment of Contempt**

[Title of court]

[Title of case]

NO. \_\_\_\_\_

ORDER AND JUDGMENT OF  
CONTEMPT

[Alternative 1, for direct or hybrid contempt]

1. On [date], at \_\_\_\_\_, in the immediate view and presence of the court, contemner [did/said] the following: [Describe in detail the conduct or words constituting contempt]. On [date], contemner had been warned that the conduct described above, if continued, would constitute contempt, as follows: [Describe warning].

[If transcript is available, add]

The full transcript of that portion of the proceeding containing this occurrence is attached to and made a part of this order and judgment.

*[For hybrid contempt, add]*

Contemner was notified *[orally by the court on [date], by the issuance and service of an order to show cause]* that the conduct described above was contemptuous.

*[Alternative 2, for indirect contempt]*

1. In the course of proceedings in the case of \_\_\_\_\_, Case No. \_\_\_\_\_, the court gave the following order or direction to contemner, who was told that violation of the order or direction would become contempt of court on [date]: *[Describe in detail (or state language of) the order violated, including the court's jurisdiction to make it, or specify in detail the conduct warned against]*.

*[If transcript is available, add]*

The full transcript of that portion of the proceeding containing this occurrence is attached to and made a part of this order and judgment.

Contemner willfully failed to comply with the court's order as follows: *[Describe violation in detail]*.

*[Continue for all contempt]*

*[Alternative 1]*

2. The court heard and considered contemner's *[explanation/excuse/apology]* for the conduct and rejected it because *[specify reason for rejection]*.

*[Alternative 2]*

2. The court offered the contemner an opportunity to present an explanation or excuse for the conduct and the contemner declined.

*[Continue]*

3. After due consideration, the court finds, beyond a reasonable doubt:

a. That the contemner is guilty of contempt of court in violation of [section 1209\(a\) of the Code of Civil Procedure](#) as follows:

*[Add applicable subsection(s)]*

**Subsection (a)** — Disorderly, contemptuous, or insolent behavior toward the judge while holding the court, tending to interrupt the due course of trial or other judicial proceeding.

[and/or]

**Subsection (a)(2)** — A breach of the peace, boisterous conduct, or violent disturbance, tending to interrupt the due course of a trial or other judicial proceeding.

[and/or]

**Subsection (a)(5)** — Disobedience of any lawful judgment, order, or process of the court.

[and/or]

**Subsection (a)(8)** — Any other unlawful interference with the process or proceedings of a court.

[Specify any additional subsections violated]

[For indirect contempt for violation of an order, add]

b. That contemner had knowledge of the order, was able to comply at the time of the order and continues to have such ability, and has willfully failed to comply with the order.

[Continue for all contempt]

[Punishment for contemptuous act]

c. That the contemner is sentenced to

[Either]

pay a fine of \$\_\_\_\_\_ [not to exceed \$1000]

[and/or]

spend \_\_\_\_\_ days [not to exceed five] in the County jail.

[Or, if contempt is failure to perform act contemner can still perform]

confinement in the County jail until contemner performs the following act, or until the conclusion of the underlying proceeding: [specify act required].

[Continue]

d. That execution of the sentence of the court is

[Choose applicable clause]

stayed to [date] at \_\_\_\_\_, in Department \_\_\_\_\_. Contemner is ordered to return at that time.

**Note:** If contemner is an attorney, or a sexual assault victim who refuses to testify, stay for at least three days. CCP §§128(b), 1209(c). See discussion in §3.38.

[or]

not stayed, and contemner is ordered to pay the fine [and/or] is remanded to custody forthwith.

[Continue]

e. That the clerk of the court is ordered immediately to file this order and enter the contempt on the docket of the court and to deliver to contemner a copy of this order.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Judge of the Superior Court

#### **D. [§3.96] Script: Coercive Imprisonment of Witness for Direct Contempt**

The following spoken form should be used to impose coercive imprisonment for direct contempt against a witness who refuses to answer questions. See CCP §1219. Essentially the form follows the direct contempt procedure for handling a contemptuous act that occurs in the court's immediate view and presence. See CCP §1211. For a direct contempt procedure checklist, see §3.7. For a sample contempt order, which is also required (see CCP §1211), see §3.95.

(1) *Make a preliminary finding of the witness's refusal to answer question(s):*

The court finds that [a question/questions] relevant to these proceedings [has/have] been asked of the witness and the witness refuses to answer the question[s].

(2) *Find that there is no privilege not to answer questions. In a misdemeanor proceeding, for example, state the following:*

The court finds that the witness has been granted immunity under [section 1324.1 of the Penal Code](#) and has no privilege against self-incrimination under the state or federal constitution, nor any other privilege under the Evidence Code.

(3) *Order the witness to answer:*

I hereby order you to answer the question[s]. Do you intend to comply with my order?

(4) *Warn the witness that continued refusal will result in imprisonment for contempt:*

I hereby warn you that if you refuse to answer the question[s], I will find you in contempt of court under the provisions of [section 1211 of the Code of Civil Procedure](#). Under [section 1219](#) of that code, I will remand you to the custody of the sheriff without bail and order that you remain in [his/her] custody until you are ready to answer questions posed to you in this matter.

Do you understand the consequences of your refusal to answer the question[s]?

With this understanding, do you still refuse to answer the questions[s]?

(5) *Find the witness in contempt:*

You leave me no choice. I find that you are in direct contempt of this court under the provisions of [section 1211 of the Code of Civil Procedure](#) for willful refusal to answer [a] question[s] in the immediate view and presence of the court and at its direction. I have ordered you to answer. I find that your refusal to answer the question[s] is an omission to perform an act that is presently within your power to perform, under the provisions of [section 1219 of the Code of Civil Procedure](#).

I hereby order you to be remanded to the custody of the sheriff without bail and to be imprisoned until you have performed the act I have ordered of you, namely, the answering of all relevant questions put to you in this case.

(6) *Continue the underlying proceedings and order the witness returned to court periodically to give him or her a chance to purge the contempt.*

(7) *Find that the witness has purged the contempt when he or she agrees to answer:*

I hereby find that the contemner has purged [himself/herself] of the contempt order, and the contempt order is discharged. The contemner is ordered released from custody.

☛ **JUDICIAL TIP:** The coercive punishment must end when the contemner no longer has the power to perform the act. For a witness who refuses to testify, this usually means the conclusion of the underlying proceeding. See [CCP §1219](#); *McComb v Superior Court* (1977) 68 CA3d 89, 99, 137 CR 233. However, if there are additional reasons for requiring the testimony, the court may continue the imprisonment until the imprisonment ceases to serve a coercive purpose. Once the act becomes impossible to perform or the coercive purpose ceases, the incarceration becomes punitive and is subject to the five-day limitation in [CCP §1218](#) for punitive confinement. See *In re Farr* (1974) 36 CA3d 577, 584, 111 CR 649. For discussion, see [§3.28](#).

## VI. [§3.97] ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

### (1) Contempt

CALIFORNIA JUDGES BENCHBOOK: CIVIL PROCEEDINGS—BEFORE TRIAL, SECOND EDITION §§17.71–17.118 (Cal CJER 2008).

CALIFORNIA JUDGES BENCHBOOK: CIVIL PROCEEDINGS—TRIAL §§11.2–11.39 (Cal CJER 1997).

Rothman, California Judicial Conduct Handbook §§4.00–4.39 (3d ed CJA/Thomson West 2007).

2 Witkin & Epstein, California Criminal Law, *Crimes Against Governmental Authority* §§29–30 (3d ed 2000).

5 Witkin & Epstein, California Criminal Law, *Criminal Trial* §§22–23 (3d ed 2000).

7 Witkin, California Procedure, *Trial* §§168–188 (5th ed 2008).

8 Witkin, California Procedure, *Enforcement of Judgment* §§339–363 (5th ed 2008).

### (2) Sanctions

CALIFORNIA JUDGES BENCHBOOK: CIVIL PROCEEDINGS—BEFORE TRIAL, SECOND EDITION §§17.2–17.70 (Cal CJER 2008).

CALIFORNIA JUDGES BENCHBOOK: CIVIL PROCEEDINGS—TRIAL §§11.40–11.78 (Cal CJER 1997).

CALIFORNIA JUDGES BENCHBOOK: CIVIL PROCEEDINGS—AFTER TRIAL §§7.5, 7.30 (Cal CJER 1998).

Rothman, California Judicial Conduct Handbook §§4.40–4.42 (3d ed CJA/Thomson Reuters/West 2007).

7 Witkin, California Procedure, *Trial* §§210–241 (5th ed 2008).

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