

Superior Court of California County of Santa Clara

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 10, 2026

Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara Welcomes Students for 2026 Color of Justice Program

SAN JOSÉ, Calif. (February 10, 2026): On February 6, 2026, the Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara proudly hosted its annual *Color of Justice* event, a program designed to inspire and empower youth from all backgrounds to explore careers within the justice system. The event welcomed students from across the county for a morning of candid conversation, mentorship, and career exploration within the justice system, underscoring the critical need for initiatives that foster diversity and representation in the legal field.

The program opened with introductions and welcoming remarks from Hon. Julie Emede, Presiding Judge, Hon. Micaél P. Estremera and Hon. Julia Alloggiamento, Chair of the Court's Community Outreach Committee. Students then heard from a featured panel discussion including Hon. Jessica Delgado, Hon. Leah Abraham, Miguel Rodriguez, Deputy Public Defender, and Byron Suarez, Deputy District Attorney.

"Justice cannot happen unless the justice system reflects the community it serves, and that's what we're here to talk about today," said Presiding Judge Emede. "If you love the law and you want to be a lawyer, I'm here to tell you—you can be a lawyer. Whatever path you choose, be honest with yourself about what matters to you, and commit to doing your best."

A compelling panel discussion featuring Byron Suarez, Deputy District Attorney, and Miguel Rodriguez, Deputy Public Defender, provided students with real-life perspectives on overcoming obstacles and pursuing careers in law. These powerful narratives were followed by interactive table discussions, where students engaged directly with mentors from diverse backgrounds, including attorneys, judges, probation officers, and law enforcement professionals.

Serving as the program's distinguished keynote speaker, Hon. Rebeca Esquivel-Pedroza shared remarks centered on representation, belonging, and the importance of diverse lived experiences in strengthening the courts. She emphasized that inclusion takes real access to mentorship and support so students can see themselves in legal and public service roles and feel confident pursuing them.

“When things feel difficult, don’t try to figure it out alone, ask for help early. Reaching out is a sign of strength, and it shows you’re taking your future seriously. Please don’t feel intimidated to approach us. We’re here to answer your questions, connect you to resources, and support you as you take your next steps,” said Hon. Rebeca Esquivel-Pedroza.

Throughout the table discussions, mentors shared personal journeys and practical advice, helping students understand that there is no single “right” path into the legal field. The goal of these conversations was to make the profession feel more approachable and to encourage students to see justice-related careers as attainable, especially for students who may not have had that visibility or support before.

The *Color of Justice* event would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of our partners, whose dedication to recruitment and outreach ensured that a diverse group of students could take part. The Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara extends its deepest gratitude to all who contributed to the success of this event. The Court's Community Outreach Committee acknowledges the generous funding from the California Judges Foundation, whose commitment to enhancing communities across California has been instrumental in making this program possible.

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Figure 1. Students with Hon. Micaél P. Estremera and Byron Suarez, Deputy District Attorney.

ALT TEXT: Students pose in a conference room between two men in suits: panelist Byron Suarez on the left and Judge Hon. Micaél P. Estremera on the right, with the California state seal behind them.



Figure 2. Hon. Rebeca Esquivel-Pedroza poses with attendees holding their award certificates

ALT TEXT: Eight students and a woman in a purple suit pose in a courthouse hallway; several hold certificates and wear name tags, and one person gives a thumbs-up beneath signs for Administration and the Judicial Conference Room.



Figure 3- Panelist Byron Suarez, Deputy District Attorney, speaks with students about his path to a legal career.

ALT TEXT: A man in a navy suit speaks into a microphone to a seated group in a wood-paneled conference room, with an American flag and a California state seal displayed behind him.



Figure 4- Students and mentors participate in networking, small-group discussions, and collaborative activities.

ALT TEXT: Students sit around a large conference table in a wood-paneled room, listening and talking during a small-group discussion. A mentor in a white jacket sits near the center of the table, with the American flag and California state seal visible on the wall behind them.



Figure 5- Hon. Rebeca Esquivel-Pedroza addresses attendees

ALT TEXT: A woman in a purple suit speaks in a microphone at a podium, while students seated in the foreground listen. An American flag stands to the left of the podium.



Figure 6- Hon. Julia Alloggiamento, Byron Suarez, Deputy District Attorney; Hon. Leah Abrahams; Hon. Jessica Delgado; Hon. Micaél P. Estremera; Hon. Rebeca Esquivel-Pedroza; and Miguel Rodriguez, Deputy Public Defender.

ALT TEXT: Seven adults in business attire pose for a group photo in front of large windows with a city view, standing shoulder to shoulder and smiling.