



# LOS ANGELES COUNTY CONSUMER & BUSINESS AFFAIRS

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Innovative Online Tool to Increase Options for County Litigants Through Dispute Resolution**

*Program allows County residents an opportunity to use technology to settle their cases online, avoiding in-person trials*

LOS ANGELES – Today, the Los Angeles County Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) announced the upcoming launch of the Los Angeles Online Dispute Resolution (LA-ODR) program, in collaboration with the Superior Court of California, Los Angeles County and its Dispute Resolution Program (DRP), and the Center for Conflict Resolution. The new innovative program will expand alternate dispute resolution methods to LA County court litigants through the use of technology, to better meet their needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Funded by DCBA and DRP, the LA-ODR program is designed to assist parties in resolving disputes intended for Small Claims court, while supporting social distancing practices. Eligible small claims litigants will be able to access the service immediately.

The program is available for those who filed Small Claims cases and can be accessed at <https://my.lacourt.org/odr/small-claims>. The Court will notify parties of the LA-ODR on previously scheduled and new Small Claims filings, which guides litigants through step-by-step registration. Once registered, the litigants can confidentially share documents, propose a resolution, and can reach a written settlement agreement before a court hearing. If a resolution is reached by all parties, the LA-ODR generates the forms for a settlement agreement, and once finalized, the agreement is electronically filed with the Court at no cost. LA-ODR is mobile-friendly, enabling litigants to use the platform on their smartphones. A Spanish-language version of LA-ODR will be available soon.

Parties unable to reach an agreement among themselves have an opportunity to request assistance from a certified mediator to facilitate and guide necessary conversations between parties to find common ground and address realistic solutions. LA-ODR is powered by TurboCourt, an online dispute



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resolution platform built by Intresys, Inc.

DCBA's own award-winning ODR platform has established a long-standing foundation for resolving court-connected disputes, well before the pandemic. Since 2014, DCBA has demonstrated great success in training mediators to resolve disputes online. As part of the Los Angeles Superior Court's LA-ODR platform, DCBA will be the leading mediation service provider. In addition to the Center for Conflict Resolution, DCBA has partnered with a network of Dispute Resolution Program Act (DRPA) agencies who are part of LA County's longstanding Dispute Resolution Program (DRP) run by the Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services department (WDACS)/Human Relations Commission. They include: Asian Pacific American Dispute Resolution Center, California Conference for Equality Justice, California Lawyer's for the Arts, Korean American Coalition - Los Angeles, and Loyola Center for Conflict Resolution. Together, we will provide certified and experienced mediators to assist litigants.

"Thank you to the Superior Court, the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs and the Center for Conflict Resolution for collaborating to make this innovative program accessible to our communities," Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger said. "This is an important milestone in our effort to make Los Angeles County a leader in efficient and effective technological solutions for our residents."

"We congratulate DCBA and the Center for Conflict Resolution on this new tool to help handle court disputes," stated Robin Toma, WDACS Assistant Director and Human Relations Commission Executive Director. "It's exciting to see this new court project, as all of our LA County Dispute Resolution program agencies are moving to online mediations of community and other conflicts due to the pandemic's challenge to in-person conflict resolution."

"In the midst of challenges our residents face due to the pandemic and the County's efforts to prevent COVID-19 surges, this innovative approach couldn't come at a better time," said Rafael Carbajal, Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Consumer and Business Affairs. "Our department has seen hundreds of residents successfully resolve disputes through our existing online dispute resolution program. We are proud to bring this proven model to County litigants at a time our residents need it most."

For more information about DCBA's dispute resolution services, visit [dcba.lacounty.gov/mediation](https://dcba.lacounty.gov/mediation).

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