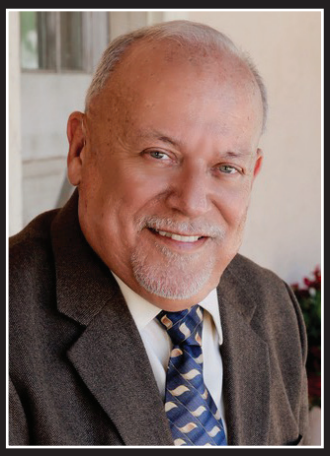

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Hon. Frank J. Ochoa

Santa Barbara County Superior Court, Retired

Judge Ochoa has served as a private mediator, arbitrator, referee, special master and hearing officer since he retired in 2015 after more than three decades of service on the superior and municipal courts. He heard the full range of civil, family and probate cases, including complex, high-profile matters, on the Santa Barbara Superior Court (1997-2015). Impelled by his Legal Aid experience and a realization that the traditional litigation forum was not the best way to resolve some of the cases in court, Judge Ochoa implemented the CADRe (Court Administered Appropriate Dispute Resolution) "ADR" Program.

Practice Areas

Complex state and federal cases involving business/contract, civil rights, construction defect, education, employment, personal injury, property and eminent domain; family, probate and domestic relations

Conflict Resolution Experience

Judge Ochoa was appointed to the Santa Barbara County Municipal Court in 1983 and served multiple terms as Presiding and Assistant Presiding Judge during his 14-year tenure. He was elected to the Superior Court in 1997, where he handled assignments to the civil, criminal, family law and juvenile departments. He presided over numerous cases involving public figures that generated extensive media coverage.

He served as Presiding Judge from 1998-2000, managing the consolidation of the superior and municipal courts and leading the effort to design and establish the court's CADRe program, which is still an integral part of the court's civil operation.

Judge Ochoa was temporarily assigned to the California Court of Appeal in 1985. He authored seven decisions, three of which were published: *Keith v. Buchanan,* referred to by *Witkin* as the case giving "definitive construction" to express warranties under Section 2313 of the Uniform Commercial Code; *Baker v. Pratt,* which dealt with issues stemming from the dissolution of 6 intertwined corporate entities, including a complex attorneys' fees issue under the "common fund" and "substantial benefit" doctrines; and *People v. Nottingham,* in which a murder conviction was reversed.

He began his legal career as a staff attorney at Legal Services of Northern California, ultimately serving as Executive Director of the Legal Aid Foundation of Santa Barbara (1980-83).

Organizations & Achievements

- ***Recipient:*** John T. Rickard Judicial Service Award, Santa Barbara County Bar Association; Hero for Justice Award, Legal Aid Foundation of Santa Barbara County; Influential Latino, *Latino Today*; Judge of the Year, Southern California Mediation Association; Distinguished Alumni, Martin Luther King, Jr. School of Law; President's Judicial Award, Santa Barbara County Bar Association
- ***Member/Former Member:*** National Academy of Distinguished Neutrals; numerous California Judicial Council task forces, workgroups and committees; California Judges Association Executive Board, legislative review and court review committees
- ***Teacher:*** University of California at Santa Barbara Lecturer since 2009; Professor, Santa Barbara College of Law, 1992-97.
- ***Trainer/Public Speaker:*** Numerous bar-association sponsored MCLE programs on mediation, elimination of bias, ethics and other ADR and civil law issues, as well as programs related to probation services and family law

Education & Training

- Mediation training, Straus Institute and American Institute of Mediation; extensive arbitration training via AAA and bar associations
- J.D., Martin Luther King Jr. School of Law, University of California, Davis
- B.A., University of California, Santa Barbara

Judge Ochoa is available throughout California.