

JUDGE DAPHNE G. SYKES

After graduation from City University of New York Law School, as a new Los Angeles County prosecutor, Judge Sykes managed a full caseload on the fast-paced misdemeanor calendar, vertically litigating all phases of the prosecution – from motions to jury trials. There she distinguished herself as adept at interviewing witnesses and obtaining the trust of victims in emotionally charged domestic violence and child abuse cases.

In the Compton City Attorney's Office, Judge Sykes implemented the Parking Appeals Citation Program and became its first hearing officer. As a deputy city attorney, she specialized in municipal law, issuing legal opinions for the personnel, planning and code enforcement departments, and City Council.

Private practice afforded Judge Sykes the opportunity to touch upon areas of employment, corporate, and personal injury law. One of the most meaningful assignments was her acceptance of court appointments to represent criminal defendants at trial and on appeal. This resulted in her sensitivity to the challenges – legal and practical – of both prosecuting and defending a case from jury trial to appellate review.

As a federal prosecutor, Judge Sykes's scrutiny of a case file resulted in a published opinion of an oft-overlooked sentencing issue: the upward adjustment in prison time for use of a child during a crime. She also filed briefs and successfully argued before the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. While a deputy district attorney in Orange County, Judge Sykes was assigned to the Law and Motion/Writs and Appeals Unit, handling Fourth and Fifth Amendment issues, such as the validity of search warrants, the legality of seized evidence and the admissibility of statements and confessions.

Upon appointment to the Orange County Superior Court, Judge Sykes conducted preliminary hearings, ruled on pretrial and post-convictions motions and conducted jury trials. Currently, Judge Sykes presides over all aspects of divorce and paternity cases, including child custody, spousal support, child support, business valuations, property characterization and division, psychological evaluations and restraining orders. She also presided over all of the adoption finalizations for Orange County.

Early in her legal career, Judge Sykes mentored incarcerated teenage girls housed at the Dorothy Kirby Center. She established a ballet program in the City of Compton, with master classes, recitals and field trips to professional ballet performances. She also taught the soft martial art of tai chi and ballet to teenage girls in foster care. Sykes has been certified by the American Red Cross to teach HIV and AIDS awareness.

Having served as a law library trustee and on the grand jury selection committee, in addition to her daily assigned duties, Judge Sykes has volunteered in the court's law internship program, Peer Court (on-campus, student-led hearings for juveniles whose peers determine punishment) and county-wide, high school mock trial competitions.

Judge Sykes was featured in Orange Coast Magazine as one of the Top Ten Influential Women in the Orange County. She was also honored by the March of Dimes as a Distinguished Citizen and by the Los Angeles Chapter of the NAACP Youth Council with the Meritorious Woman Award. An avid proponent of service, Judge Sykes is a founding member of Orange County's Thurgood Marshall Bar Association and an active member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. While sorority chapter president, she forged a partnership with local theatres in projects which provided financial assistance to college-bound, high school seniors. Sykes received the sorority's Ida B. Wells Outstanding Graduate Member Award for the Far Western Region. She has also served on the boards of the Long Beach Ballet Arts Center and the former Progressive Arts Academy. Judge Sykes is also Committee Chairman of her son's boy scout troop. A classical piano and sacred choral music enthusiast, personal highlights were Judge Sykes's participation in a mass community choir, accompanied by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Pacific Chorale's Music Festival at Segerstrom Concert Hall, and service as a board member and singer in the Laguna Beach Chamber Singers. A daily practitioner of yoga, Judge Sykes seeks to strike a delicate balance between caring for her teenage son and her extended family, volunteering in her community and cultivating her passionate commitment to the law.