

“Tip of the Day” Radio Program

Five-Minute Law Lessons in Spanish

The Superior Court of Ventura County operates two Self-Help Legal Access Centers, which offer information and one-on-one assistance for clients. While the Ventura center averaged more than 500 clients per month, the Oxnard center, in the predominately Spanish-speaking La Colonia neighborhood, assisted only 100 to 120 people per month. Oxnard staff were convinced that more residents who needed services were either unaware of the center or apprehensive about using it—perhaps because of cultural and educational issues or negative experiences with governments in other countries.

A staff member at the Colonia center had the idea to broadcast a court-related “Tip of the Day” in Spanish on a popular radio program in the Latino community, and the superior court initiated the project. Five-minute public-service announcements, broadcast at 10:30 a.m. Monday through Friday, covered topics raised by people seeking help at the county’s self-help centers. Each tip aimed to provide general legal information and to inform citizens about help available from the center or at court.

Colonia center staff did not expect to match the Ventura center’s level of client service but rather to gain a measurable increase in Oxnard. The program also hoped to boost local Spanish-speaking immigrants’ trust in the judicial system. Most Spanish-speaking people tend to rely on and trust radio programs.

The announcements were broadcast on *Mercadito a el Aire Libre*, a popular on-air swap meet, drawing people who want to buy, sell, or trade virtually anything or who want to make public announcements.

A center staff member called in the Tip of the Day live from the self-help center, keeping the costs and time required low. The same person was used every day—one with a personable and sincere speaking voice, a strong command of Spanish, and in-depth knowledge about the courts.

Because the station believed that the self-help centers were a valuable community resource and that the tips were of interest to its listeners, it did not charge the court for airtime, and the host of the show supported the tips with strong lead-ins, demonstrated rapport with the court staff member, and follow-up questions.

Tip Topics

Many tips give information about legal matters listeners are likely to face:

- Landlord and eviction issues
- Restraining orders
- Child custody and support
- Contracts
- Driver’s licenses
- Automobile insurance
- Child safety seats
- Rejected checks
- Vehicle accidents

Other tips focus on the court’s programs and services:

- The self-help centers
- The children’s waiting room at court
- Assistance with family-related legal matters
- Interpreter services
- The court’s Web site

Impacts

- The number of people seeking assistance at the Colonia center has increased to 220 per month. To prepare self-represented litigants for interaction with the court, the center helps them complete forms properly, follow court procedures, and understand the judicial process better. These litigants then take up less judicial time to resolve their issues.
- Many people report that they became aware of the center's existence from the Tip of the Day.
- The radio station broadcasting the program receives frequent calls from listeners asking for the phone number of the self-help center. Because of the interest, the station keeps brochures about the center in its lobby.
- The general information in the tips also helps people comply with the law and stay out of court.



People throughout Ventura's La Colonia neighborhood—even workers picking strawberries in the farmlands—can listen to and learn from the Tip of the Day.



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