

## **ACTION PLAN TO ASSIST SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS**

This Action Plan is the product of the Yuba County Superior Court and the Yuba County Self-Represented Litigant Project Committee (See Attachment I for list of members). The Court wished to acknowledge the contribution of all who helped in the development of this Action Plan and looks forward to continuing its collaboration with these participants and the community at large in fully achieving the desired results: a more informed body of court users who have ready access to information about, and services provided by the state's legal system.

### **Historical Background and Demographics**

Yuba County is one of the original 27 counties into which California was partitioned in 1850. Total land area is 630.7 square miles. The county is bounded on the west by the Feather River, across which lies Sutter County; on the north by Butte County and the southern tip of Plumas County; on the east by Sierra and Nevada counties, with the Yuba River as part of that boundary and on the south by the Bear River, across which lie Placer and Sutter counties.

The county derives its name from the river that bisects it, which was discovered by Jedediah Smith in 1828 and named by John A. Sutter (c.1842).

The first white settlement was made when Sutter expanded his territories into the area in 1841 and leased part of the lands to Theodore Cordua, a Prussian emigrant, who called his settlement New Mechlenburg (1842). Its center was at the site of Marysville, to which he added a seven-league grant of his own in 1844. Marysville, which has always been the county seat, was named for a settler who was a member of the Donner party.

Its site at the confluence of the Feather and Yuba rivers provided ideal geography for a supply port and trade center for the many mining towns that sprang up along the rivers and creeks of the foothills and up north into the mountains of the Sierra Nevada during the gold rush.

Hydraulic mining in the late 1850's and the following decades washed away many of these mushroom communities and so clogged the Yuba River with debris that levees had to be built to protect neighboring land. That form of mining was succeeded by dredging, which proved profitable for another hundred years.

The county's economy later came to be based on agriculture, and the bad working conditions of migratory hop pickers led to the tragic Wheatland Riots of 1913. In more recent times the main crops have been rice, citrus, peaches and nuts. Lumbering, livestock and poultry are also important components of the county's economy. The county has major reservoirs for hydroelectric uses, flood control, and irrigation and has Beale Air Force Base located close to Marysville.

In 1983 the county had a population of 51,400; with an area of 409,408 acres, it had 80 persons per square mile. As of the 2000 census, the population of the county stood at 60,219. Projections to the year 2020 put the population at 81,900. This represents a potential 27.5% increase.

**Yuba County Population Distribution**

<i>Race &amp; Hispanic Origin, 2000</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
White	42,537	70.6%
Black/African American	1,904	3.2%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1,569	2.6%
Asian	4,519	7.5%
Pacific Islander	123	0.2%
Other race	5,989	9.9%
Two or more races	3,578	5.9%
Hispanic origin, total	10,449	17.3%
Mexican	8,587	
Puerto Rican	221	
Cuban	43	
Other Hispanic	1,598	
<b><i>Gender, 2000</i></b>	<b>XXXXXXXXXX</b>	<b>XXXXXXXXXX</b>
Male	30,346	
Female	29,873	
<b><i>Age, 2000</i></b>	<b>XXXXXXXXXX</b>	<b>XXXXXXXXXX</b>
Under 5 year	4,960	2.7%
18 years and over	41,529	22.5%
12 years and over	38,630	21.0%
65 years and over	6,410	3.5%
85 years and over	610	0.3%
Median age	31.4 years	

**Educational Profile**

There are a total of 10 school districts providing services to a total of 6,167 enrolled students. Student performance on the standardized Stanford 9 Scores, an evaluation tool which attempts to represent that percent of students scoring at or above the 50<sup>th</sup> National Percentile Rank, reflects the following data:

Area / Subject Matter	Percentile
3 <sup>rd</sup> grade reading	41st
3 <sup>rd</sup> grade math	56th
7 <sup>th</sup> grade reading	48th
7 <sup>th</sup> grade math	46th
11 <sup>th</sup> grade reading	27th
11 <sup>th</sup> grade math	34th

The average 12<sup>th</sup> grade student SAT score in this county is 457 for verbal and 486 for math. This however only reflects the 14.4% of enrolled students who went through the evaluation process. The Superintendent of Schools for Yuba County is Richard Teagarden.

### **County Governance**

As of February 2001 the county had 25,354 registered voters equating to 42.1% of the population. Democrats claim 10,072 or 39.7% with Republicans accounting for another 41% the registered voters. The county's nine (9) legislative districts are comprised of two Congressional, four State Senatorial and three State Assembly districts.

Public Safety personnel consists of a Sheriff in combination with 121 sworn officers as of 1999. Total reported crimes for year 2000 stands at 2,826 with 342 (12.1%) reported as violent crimes.

### **Income & Poverty Information**

The median household income per 1997 available data was estimated to be \$26,842.

### **Types of Households**

<i>Type of Household</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
With person under 18	8,767	26.8%
With person over 65	4,705	14.4%
Family households	14,801	45.2%
Single Person households	4,456	13.6%
Receiving Public Assistance	n/a	
Receiving Social Security	n/a	
Persons per Household	2.87	
Persons per Family	3.34	
Institutionalized Population	483	
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>20,535</b>	
<b>Total Statistical Households</b>	<b>32,729</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Housing & Construction**

<i>Housing Units, 2000</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
TOTAL	22,636	100%
Occupied	20,535	90.7%
Seasonal / Recreational Use	410	1.8%
Single Family Units	n/a	
Owner Occupied Units	11,105	49.1%
Renter Occupied Units	9,430	41.7%
Median Value Single Family	n/a	
Median Rent	n/a	

<i>New Private Housing Units Authorized by Permit</i>		
1998	153	
1999	221	
2000	84	

1. ***Description of Need:***

Yuba County is an extremely poor, agrarian rural area. As such, many of its inhabitants are unable to hire private attorneys to handle their various legal needs and as a result must access information and services from the legal system through self-representation. The Court is able to identify the following information about the types of cases involving self-represented litigants using the courts in Yuba County. During the period for which data is available, November 01, 2001 thru May 31, 2002, cases filed with one or both parties representing themselves constituted 74.8% of all cases presented to the court as illustrated in table 1 below.

***Table 1***

<i>Representation Type</i>	<i>Number Filed</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Pro-per One or both parties	255	74.8%
Attorney Represented	86	25.2%
Total Cases Filed	341	100%

Family Law cases account for a large portion of the court's resources as shown in Table 2 below.

***Table 2***

<i>Case Type</i>	<i># Cases</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Original Mediation	119	49%
Modification Custody	126	51%
Domestic Violence Allegations	111	45.3%
Prior CPS History	58	24%
Hours of Mediation Service	483	
Custody Investigations	51	21%
Mediation – Successful	179	73%
Mediation - Unsuccessful	66	27%

**2. Program Areas:**

The Yuba Self-Represented Litigant Project Committee (Appendix I) met over a period of two days from April 20-21, 2001. Results from this and subsequent meetings with community service providers indicate a strong need by self-represented litigants for information about the legal system including actual resources and access to these resources in the areas of Health, Education, Counseling, Rehabilitation and Employment in the county.

**3. Program Action Plans:**

- a. **Program Description:** The primary and ongoing efforts of this program are directed at providing comprehensive, timely and detailed information to Yuba county residents in need of court services and legal information and/or resources. The program areas identified below were designed by the SRL Committee to address these needs.
- b. **Program Partners:** Collaboration with Yuba County Victim Witness, Yuba-Sutter Legal Center for Seniors and the California Rural Legal Assistance constitutes the organization partnerships associated with the Self-Represented Litigant Action Plan to date.

**c. Program Plans: 1.0 Increasing Community Resources**

<i>Task</i>	<i>Time</i>
1a. Research Local Resources Available	Completed
1b. Create Handouts of Local Resources	Completed
1c. Create Library of Local Resources	Completed
1d. Make Library Available in Courthouse & Courthouse Annex	Completed

### Program Plan: 2.0 Improving Legal Information Assistance

<i>Task</i>	<i>Time</i>
2a. Create Information Assistance	Completed
2b. Create Brochure explaining Family Law	Completed
2c. Create Brochure explaining Child Support Assistance	Completed
2d. Create Brochure explaining Domestic Violence Assistance	Completed

### Program Plan: 3.0 Funding

<i>Task</i>	<i>Time</i>
3a. Acquire SRL Implementation Grant Funds	Completed
3b. Apply Yuba County Superior Court Funds	Ongoing

### Program Plan: 4.0 Operations

<i>Task</i>	<i>Resources Req.</i>	<i>Time</i>
4a. Family Court Services Center extended hours one day per week	FTE funding ongoing	Completed

**Program Plan: 5.0 Technology**

<i>Task</i>	<i>Time</i>
5a. Self-help computers are presently located at the Courthouse and the Annex for litigant use.	Completed

**Program Plan: 6.0 Public Education**

<i>Task</i>	<i>Time #FTE / Span</i>
6a. Create handouts regarding educational resources in the local area.	Completed
6b. Distribute handouts to Library of Local Resources, the Main Courthouse and the Courthouse Annex	Ongoing

**Program Plan: 7.0 Forms & Packets**

7a. Not impacted at this time	
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**Program Plan: 8.0 Partnerships**

<i>Task</i>	<i>Time</i>
8a. Generate collaborative relationships with: Victim Witness Yuba-Sutter Legal Center for Seniors California Rural Legal Assistance	Completed and Ongoing

**d. Existing Resources That Will Be Used:**

The following existing resources will continue to be applied to the Court's ongoing efforts to implement the Action Plan in its entirety:

- *The office of the Family Law Facilitator*
- *A Self-Represented Litigant Action Planning Grant*
- *A Self-Represented Litigant Implementation Grant*
- *A Regional Trial Court Opportunity Grant will be applied to providing mobile access for citizens in outlying areas in need of our Orientation Program and Family Law Facilitator resources.*

**e. Additional Resources Needed:**

- *Ongoing funding for staff FTE positions.*
- *A Supervised Visitation Program*

**f. Evaluation:**

All of our Self-Represented Litigant programs and efforts will be continually/periodically monitored for their impact upon program services through the application of survey instruments and court staff tracking applied to all SRL populations seeking services from the Court.

**4. *State Support:***

The court seeks the support of the Administrative Office of the Courts as well as state budget authorities for funding to effectively implement some of the items in the action plan. The court intends to actively participate in the processes of budget and grant submissions to the AOC and other applicable funding sources.

Additionally, an effort to align the knowledge base and collaborative efforts of all other courts relative to Self-Represented Litigant resources and activities is highly valued. The opportunity to share perspectives and approaches with all other courts with Self-Help Programs through a conference format is strongly desired.

**5. *Unique Approaches:***

Yuba County has received a Regional Trial Court Opportunity Grant that will be used to acquire a mobile unit to provide Self-Represented Litigants living in outlying area with Orientation and Family Law Facilitator services and resources.

**6. *Sustaining the Action Plan:***

The county intends to sustain this Self-Represented Litigant Action Plan through the continued application of its annual budgetary resources.

**7. *Other Comments:***

The Yuba County Self-Represented Action Plan is well on its way to developing and delivering a concentrated and comprehensive approach to the needs of Self-Represented Litigants in our county. The Project Committee wishes to acknowledge the support and assistance of the AOC in bringing this project to fruition.

Attachment I

Members of the Yuba County  
Self-Represented Litigant Project Committee

Presiding Judge

Court Clerk Staff

Court Executive Officer

Director of Victim Witness

Family Court Services Director

California Rural Legal Assistance Director

Administrator of Yuba-Sutter Legal Center for Seniors