

**California Conference on Self Represented Litigants
Wednesday May 16
3:30 to 5:00 p.m.
Workshop II-A**

**Distance Services:
Using Videoconferencing, Hotlines, Email and the Web to Provide Services**

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**Handout Materials
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1. “Ask the Law Librarian” link on the Judicial Council Self-Help Center Website

The screenshot shows the California Courts Self-Help Center website. The browser title is "California Courts: Self-Help Center - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/". The website header includes "CALIFORNIA COURTS Self-Help Center" and a navigation menu with "opinions | forms | rules | courts | programs | careers | reference | search".

The main content area features a welcome message: "Welcome to the California Courts Online Self-Help Center. This Web site will help you find assistance and information, work better with an attorney, and represent yourself in some legal matters." To the right, there is a Spanish greeting: "Bienvenido. Haga clic aquí para ver este sitio en [español](#)."

The left sidebar contains several links, with "Ask the Law Librarian" circled in red. Other sidebar links include "Search the Self-Help Site", "Forms & Instructions", "Q & A", "Site Help", "Links", "Glossary", "Site Map", "Press Room", "Contact Us", and "Disclaimer".

The main content area also features several topic-specific links with icons: "Free & Low-Cost Legal Help" (with a person at a desk icon), "Families & Children" (with a family icon), "Small Claims" (with a scale icon and "\$7,500"), "Protection from Abuse" (with a leaf icon), "Seniors" (with a person icon), and "Traffic" (with a car icon). Each link includes a "[more]" link.

2. What you see when you click on the “Ask the Law Librarian” link

Get Help From The Librarian In Real Time With ASK NOW

AskNow's law librarian service lets you **ask questions and get answers, in real time**, right here on the Internet, from live law librarians throughout California. The AskNow law librarian service is available :

Monday 8 a.m.-5 p.m. & 6p.m.- 8 p.m.

Tuesday-Thursday 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Live Reference staff are not available on Holidays

When you click on the AskNow button on this page, the law librarian who answers your question may or may not be a librarian at your local law library. When the law librarian cannot answer your question by referring to free Internet resources, you may be referred to your local public law library. The law librarian expert service is not available at all times. If a law librarian is not available we recommend that you call or visit your county public law library.

It is unlawful for librarians to interpret legal information or advise an individual how the law might apply to one's situation. This kind of service would constitute the unauthorized practice of law. If you need further help to solve your legal problem, we recommend that you consult an attorney.

[About AskNow's law librarian service](#) [Participating Law Libraries](#) [Privacy Statement](#)



➔ **Once you are connected, please do not use your "forward" or "refresh/reload" buttons on your browser, or you will be disconnected!!**

If this is your first visit to our site:

You may be asked to accept a Meadco Security Certificate. You must accept this in order for our site to work for you. You will then be taken directly to our site.



[Directory of California's public law libraries](#)

Participating Libraries

Bernard E. Witkin Alameda County Law Library
Bernard E. Witkin California State Law Library
Butte County Public Law Library
Contra Costa County Public Law Library
Fresno County Law Library
Kern County Law Library
Law Library for San Bernardino
Los Angeles County Law Library
Orange County

3. Sample Chat #1

Chat Transcript	
Patron: 13:36 2005/12/05 (GMT-8)	Chat Transcript: My neighbor has put up a fence and has taken quite a bit of our property. Are there any books or resources that I can consult to know what I can or cannot do to the fence?
Librarian 1: 13:39 2005/12/05 (GMT-8)	Thank you for your inquiry. Please hold for the next available librarian. If you experience a long delay you may prefer to disconnect and try again later.
Librarian 1: 13:52 2005/12/05 (GMT-8)	[Law Librarian 17 - A librarian has joined the session]
Librarian 1: 13:52 2005/12/05 (GMT-8)	Hi Ellie, thanks for waiting, Mondays can be hectic here. Hold on while I read your question.
Patron: 13:53 2005/12/05 (GMT-8)	That's fine. Take you time.
Librarian 1: 13:56 2005/12/05 (GMT-8)	There is a good "plain English" book called "Neighbor Law" by Nolo Press, that you can find at most libraries, law libraries, and bookstores that will give you grounding on what is proper and legal for your neighbor to do. But, if you want to take legal action, you'll have to inform yourself about the law in California. That can be found online at www.leginfo.ca.gov/calaw.html in the Civil Code, around section 840. And, if you want to take legal action, you'll want to read about suing in Small Claims or Superior Court. There are a couple of good books to tell you about this, one called Everybody's Guide to Small Claims Court in California, and Win Your Lawsuit in California.
Patron: 13:57 2005/12/05 (GMT-8)	Great! thanks! By chance do you know if these laws vary from county to county?
Librarian 1: 13:59 2005/12/05 (GMT-8)	The law won't. But you raise a good question, you will probably also want to check your county's municipal code to see what they say about fences, in case you want to approach this as a building code violation. Here is a website where you can check muni codes online. http://municipalcodes.lexisnexis.com/codes/
Patron: 14:00 2005/12/05 (GMT-8)	Thank you so much for your help. I really appreciate it. Good luck with the hectic Monday.
Librarian 1: 14:00 2005/12/05 (GMT-8)	Got to move on to the next question, sorry to have to be so brief. Find the location of the Alameda County Law Libraries at www.publiclawlibrary.org Your law library is an invaluable resource in times like these.
Librarian 1: 14:01 2005/12/05 (GMT-8)	Note to staff: COMP [Law Librarian 17 - user has closed this session]
Librarian 1: 14:01 2005/12/05 (GMT-8)	Chat Session Ended.

4. Sample Chat #2

Chat Transcript: The mother currently has custody of my grandchild and refuses visitation by the father or my husband, even though the father has visitation rights. The father wishes us (grandparents) to seek guardianship of the child since the mother is a drug user, on welfare and does not provide a stable environment for the child. As grandparents of the child what are our rights?

06:51 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Librarian 1: Thank you for your inquiry. Please hold for the next available librarian. If you experience a long delay you may prefer to disconnect and try again later.
07:03 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Librarian 1: [Law Librarian 38 - A librarian has joined the session]
07:03 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Librarian 1: Hello, this is the law librarian. I'm reading your question...
07:05 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Librarian 1: You can find information on visitation rights in the Family Code section 3100 etc. This in on the Legislature's website. Would you like the link?
07:08 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Patron: Yes, please.
07:10 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Librarian 1: The Family Codes are at http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/calaw.html
07:12 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Librarian 1: I will send information on guardianship next.
07:12 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Patron: Thanks!
07:14 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Librarian 1: 2 things: First, an excellent book called "The Guardianship Book for California: how to become a child's guardian / by David Brown and Emily Doskow. Published by Nolo, 2005. This will give step by step guidelines. Many law libraries, and public libraries will have this book, or you could purchase it directly from the publisher's website at http://www.nolo.com It will contain forms. It costs about \$30.
07:16 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Librarian 1: 2d - There will be basic information on guardianship on the Judicial Council of California's website. Go to http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/family/guardianship/ Just be aware that is it basic info; the book will have more detailed info, but look at the website too, to get started.
07:16 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Librarian 1: Would you like a transcript of this chat emailed to you so that you will have the websites?
07:16 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Patron: Thank you very much. I appreciate your help!
07:17 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Patron: Yes, please.
07:17 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Librarian 1: Ok, let me verify your email, is this correct? [REDACTED]
07:18 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Patron: Yes, that's correct.
07:19 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Librarian 1: Ok, I will email.
07:19 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Librarian 1: Can I help you w/ anything else?
07:19 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Patron: That's it for now. Thanks!
07:20 2005/09/19 (GMT-8)	Librarian 1: Thank you for using the 24/7 reference. Please contact us again when you need assistance finding legal information.

5. History of California Law Librarians' Online Chat Reference Service

AskNow / QuestionPoint

California Law Librarians' Online Chat Reference Service

History of the Project

September 2001	CCCLL voted to participate as law reference experts for the 24/7 Reference program of the Metropolitan Cooperative Library System.
January 2002	Law Librarians began answering targeted legal information questions for AskNow, California's online chat reference service.
December 2002	Law Librarians were answering about 100 questions per month, live and via email. Most questions were live sessions transferred to law librarians by the public library staff.
January 2, 2003	California Courts Self-Help Center website added an "Ask the Law Librarian" link to navigation bar of every page on the site. The number of questions rose from about 5 per day to 5 per hour.
August 2004	24/7 Reference, the chat software used by AskNow, was purchased by OCLC.
October 2005	AskNow began using OCLC's hybrid software, QuestionPoint:24/7.
March 2006	QuestionPoint software, originally HTML based, converted to a flash-based program.

Statistics

December 2002	The Law Librarians handled 100 questions per month, via live chat and email.
2003	During the first nine months of the year, the Law Librarians received an average of 1000 chats per month, but 11.5% were abandoned before the Librarian could answer them.
2004	The Law Librarians consistently handled 290-295 live chats per week.
2005	The Law Librarians received over 16,400 questions, including 600 e-mail responses in 2005. Approximately 1366 questions were answered per month. The chat reference service had an approval rate of over 82%.
2006	The Law Librarians chatted with 6542 users, and answered 4515 emailed reference questions. Approximately 921 questions were answered per month.

Participating Libraries

Current Participants:

Bernard E. Witkin State Law Library of California
Fresno County Public Law Library
Los Angeles County Law Library
Orange County Public Law Library
Placer County Law Library
Sacramento County Public Law Library
San Bernardino County Law Library
San Francisco Law Library

Past Participants:

Bernard E. Witkin Alameda County Law Library
Butte County Public Law Library
Kern County Law Library
Riverside County Law Library
San Diego County Public Law Library

6. Email follow-up sent to questions over a month old

Greetings from the California law online reference service at AskNow. We apologize that we did not get to your question when you sent it to our chat line. The volume of questions we receive at this popular service is unfortunately greater than our staff can respond to in real time. Many important questions, like yours, are lined up in our e-mail follow-up queue.

We sincerely hope that you found the information you were looking for when you sent us your question, either through your own research at the law library, through consultation with an attorney or with the court staff if you had an action pending.

During our chat sessions, there are websites we often recommend for finding the official law, and for finding explanations of law and procedure for common legal matters.

www.leginfo.ca.gov/calaw.html - for browsing or searching the official California law—the “Codes”.

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp - great explanatory information, plus links to forms, courts/court rules, case law.

www.lawhelpcalifornia.org – self-help oriented documents and websites for the self-represented.

www.nolo.com – the publisher of popular self-help guides found in most law libraries, their website has excellent content.

If these do not answer your questions, it may be that you are asking something requiring more detailed explanation or interpretation that will require the work of an attorney, the court staff or our own time spent in the law library. Find the website, or the location and hours of your county’s law library at www.publiclawlibrary.org.

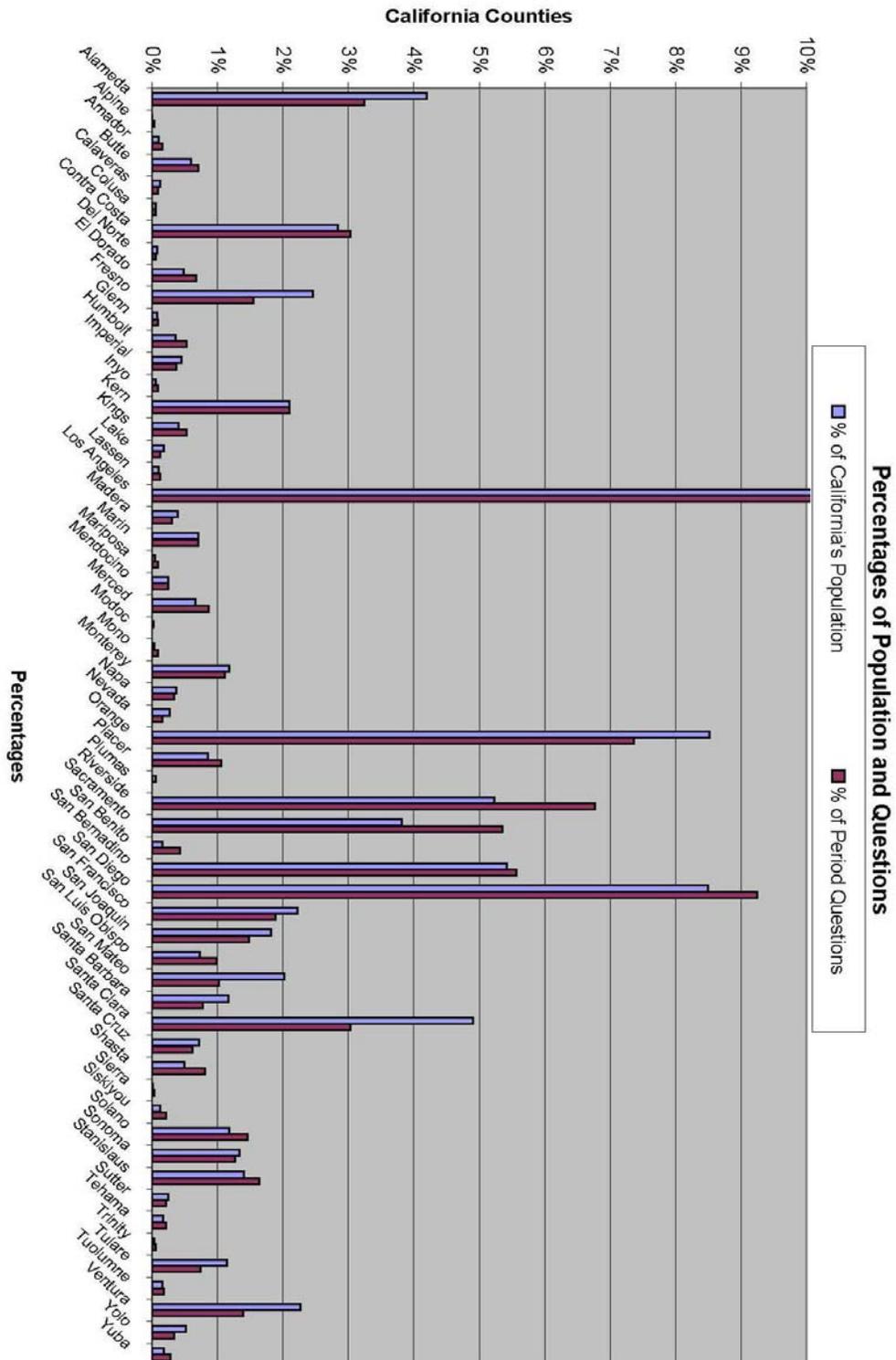
One of the law library’s main purposes is to make available to the public in one central place the research materials that will help people find answers to their questions about the law and legal procedure.

Trained and helpful staff will show you how to find and use the materials successfully. The staff also may know of local agencies or other sources of assistance or information that can help you make progress in your research.

As for the chat service, our busiest time period is between 11:00 and 2:00. If you would like to try to contact us again in the future, you will have a better chance of getting some chat time with our librarians if you can connect outside of those hours.

Sincerely, the law librarians at California AskNow.

7. Chart showing the percentage of questions coming from the various counties and the percentage of California's population residing in those counties.



8. Emailed Questions Queue.

<input type="checkbox"/>	? 2406909: Chat Transcript: How do I change the county in which I am suing the person (change of venue)? Received: 2007/04/18 10:07:55 Updated: 2007/04/18 10:07:55	-- Unassigned -- Patron: Anonymous Patron
<input type="checkbox"/>	? 2406905: Chat Transcript: What forms must be filed when filing for divorce? Received: 2007/04/18 10:05:47 Updated: 2007/04/18 10:05:47	-- Unassigned -- Patron: [REDACTED]
<input type="checkbox"/>	? 2406652: Chat Transcript: I am in the middle of a divorce. I have filed my Declaration of Disclosure, Income and Expense Declaration, and Schedule of Assets and Debts. My wife, after repeated requests, has not submitted these papers. It is my understanding that we can not move forward until she does. I also have heard that there is a way to legally force her to complete the documents. What do I need to do in order to do this? Thank You Received: 2007/04/18 08:53:17 Updated: 2007/04/18 08:53:17	-- Unassigned -- Patron: [REDACTED]
<input type="checkbox"/>	? 2406234: Chat Transcript: my 16 year old daughter ran away from home last week after being caught by a deputy sherriff in her new boyfriends vehicle having sex quite openly in front of young kids. the parents called the police. my daughter was harbored at this boyfriends house and claimed to be afraid to come home she then told the mother that I hit her last halloween with a belt which is a blantant lie she also told this woman that i abuse drugs. once again a lie that i can prove beyond any doubt.I was not aware of any of this until cps showed up at my door yesterday and asked to come into my home and speak with me I having no idea what was happening let them in and answered all of their questions. they then asked to speak to my daughter alone of which I allowed. Jessica told them again that I had struck her on halloween which the truth is my daughter struck me. I said nothing about this for fear of any consequences for her. how do I defend against these false accusations and what are my rights. thank you Received: 2007/04/18 06:21:29 Updated: 2007/04/18 08:48:49	-- Unassigned -- Patron: CAASKNOW [REDACTED]
<input type="checkbox"/>	? 2404793: Chat Transcript: Is there a way to seal or expunge a misdemeanor arrest when the case was never filed by the DA? Received: 2007/04/17 16:07:08 Updated: 2007/04/17 16:07:08	-- Unassigned -- Patron: [REDACTED]



Transferred from

9. Sample script.

DIVORCE

GETTING STARTED

Thank you for using our virtual reference service. Your question was transferred to a law librarian for email assistance. The law librarians can recommend and refer you to online and print resources that will help you find answers to your law-related questions, but we cannot explain or interpret the law itself, or give legal advice.

When trying to get a divorce, if you do not plan to employ an attorney, we recommend that you talk with your local family law facilitator. Every court in California has a lawyer that will help you with family law problems for free. These lawyers are called "family law facilitators." The facilitators can't represent you in court, but they can help in other ways. In some counties, they show people how to fill out court forms. They can give you brochures about family law and tell you about other places to get help, like lawyer referral services, legal aid clinics, and self-help law centers. To find your family law facilitator, go to <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/lowcost/flf.htm>.

You may want to look at a book called "How to Do Your Own Divorce in CA," written by Attorney Ed Sherman, and published by Nolo Press. This book will take you step by step through the process of getting divorced, including providing forms and sample instructions. This book is available at large bookstores, large libraries, directly from the publisher's website at www.nolo.com and from your local public law library. To find the law library nearest you, go to www.publiclawlibrary.org/find.html.

The California Courts website, particularly the self-help section, has some helpful information about divorce. To look at this website go to: <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/family/divorce/>.

You may want to visit your local law library for more in-depth research. To find the law library nearest you, go to www.publiclawlibrary.org/find.html.

Best of Luck,

Law Librarian

10. Index to AskNow Scripts prepared by the Sacramento County Law Librarians

CHILD SUPPORT

SETTING UP A SUPPORT ORDER / GENERAL INFO
CALCULATING CHILD SUPPORT
MODIFYING A SUPPORT ORDER
EFFECT OF SUBSEQUENT SPOUSE INCOME
ENFORCING SUPPORT ORDERS
WHEN DOES CHILD SUPPORT END?

COLLECTING JUDGMENTS

COLLECTING MONEY OWED TO YOU (not necessarily with a judgment)
LENGTH OF A JUDGMENT / RENEWING A JUDGMENT

CRIMINAL RECORDS

EXPUNGEMENT
REDUCING FELONY TO MISDEMEANOR FOR EXPUNGEMENT
Explanation of CII, a question on the expungement form
CRIMINAL RECORDS – GETTING COPIES OF YOUR OWN RECORDS
BACKGROUND CHECKS ON OTHERS

CUSTODY AND VISITATION

SETTING UP A CUSTODY/VISITATION ORDER
MODIFYING A CUSTODY/VISITATION ORDER
CHILDREN'S WISHES IN CUSTODY DISPUTES
ENFORCING CUSTODY/VISITATION
TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS
INTERSTATE CHILD CUSTODY

DISCLAIMERS

INTRODUCTION: NO LEGAL ADVICE
LOWERING EXPECTATIONS
SORRY FOR THE DELAY, NEED MORE INFO
BEYOND SCOPE

DIVORCE

GETTING STARTED
RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS
DEFAULT
WHAT'S MY NEXT STEP?

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EVICCTIONS

GENERAL LANDLORD-TENANT
SECTION 8- HUD REQUIREMENTS
PROPERTY LEFT IN RENTAL UNIT- TENANT PERSPECTIVE
EVICTING A LODGER

GUARDIANSHIP

JUDICIAL COMPLAINTS/DISQUALIFICATION

Disqualifying Judges
Complaints about Judicial Misconduct

NAME CHANGE

For an Adult
After divorce
For a Child

REFERRALS – AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS

Law Library
Facilitator
Child Support Agency
Small Claims Advisor
Nolo Press Books

REFERRALS – WEBSITES

<http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/forms/>
<http://www.uscourtfirms.com>
<http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/opinions/continue.htm>
<http://www.nolo.com>
<http://www.findlaw.com>
<http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov>
<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/calaw.html>
<http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/>
<http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/family/support/flf.htm>
<http://www.publiclawlibrary.org/find.html>

REQUEST COPIES OF COURT DOCUMENTS

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SERVICE

- Incarcerated Parties
- Service of Summons by Publication – Divorce
- Service—Personal CCP 415.10
- Service—Substituted Service CCP 415.20
- Service by mail—Notice and Acknowledgement of Receipt (FL-117):
 - Family Law under CCP 415.30
- Service by posting
- Service on a minor
- Service on a respondent who is under a conservatorship

SMALL CLAIMS

- General
- Web sites
- Books
- Where to sue
- Suing an out-of-state business
- Suing Out of State individuals
- Appeals
- Collecting Your Judgment

STATUTES OF LIMITATIONS / LIMITATIONS OF ACTIONS