

**ACTION PLAN FOR SERVING SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS
2003-2005**

**Superior Court of California
County of San Luis Obispo**

The following are the planned efforts to increase and improve services to self-represented litigants over the next two years. Needed activities and programs were determined through our community-focused input process (over 600 individuals interviewed), strategic planning process, court-user feedback, researching other courts' offerings, and staff recommendations.

CURRENT EFFORTS

We will continue and expand upon the following activities and projects. Most have been started over the past two years as a result of our Community-focused Court Planning initiative and our 2001 Self Help technical assistance grant.

Family Law Facilitator

This provided service is vital to SRLs and will be continued. It is our hope to expand the facilitator's hours as funding permits.

Small Claims Advisor

This service is provided through the District Attorney's Economic Crime Unit. The court supports this much-used resource via clerk referrals and listings in court-published resource materials. We will continue to support this program in the future.

Self Help Library:

Located in the Civil Division Department, we currently offer over 20 publications on various matters most requested by self-represented litigants (i.e. family law, unlawful detainer, small claims, beating traffic tickets, law dictionaries). Clerks have been trained on the content of the materials and refer court users to the appropriate reference.

We will continue to add materials to this library as requested by the public and as funding allows. We will seek additional grant funding to keep this library up to date and useful.

Pre-File Mediation Network:

We are in partnership with the local Bar Association and a community-based mediation center to offer low cost attorney-mediated sessions to self-represented parties (not litigants as we're attempting to divert filings) involved in limited civil matters. We began this program in response to public request for an ADR option for use *before* resorting to filing a suit.

We will continue to promote use of *pre-file* mediation to self-represented parties as a low cost, efficient, equitable means to dispute resolution. We currently offer informational materials about pre-file mediation and other ADR options as well as run a mediation awareness print ad campaign.

As funding permits, we will continue to run the print ad campaign and explore ways to expand to radio and broadcast media.

Lawyer Referral Service:

In January 2002, the local Bar Association restarted a Lawyer Referral Service after years of not offering the program. To ensure its success, the court supports this program by offering the LRS a work space at the courthouse and phone service. LRS assists hundreds of self-represented litigants a month by offering a 30 minute legal advice session for \$30. This “little bit of advice” is a huge benefit to SRLs. The court’s ability to refer to a timely, low-cost service located in the courthouse has been well received by SRLs.

The court will continue to sponsor space and phone service for the Lawyer Referral Service. Clerks will continue to refer SRLs to the service and we include LRS program information in SRLs assistance materials and media campaigns.

Staffed Reception Center

Our fully staffed reception center (opened Spring 2002) is making a valuable contribution by referring self represented litigants to the correct locations for their needs and by answering various legal process questions.

We will continue to support this staffed position and service.

NEW EFFORTS

Comprehensive Resource Brochure:

We will conduct an assessment of current local and web-based resources and services available to self-represented litigants. Contingent on funding, this information will be compiled into a professionally created brochure (our current resource sheet is not exhaustive and not well designed). The brochure will be given to court users by clerks, distributed throughout the courthouse and be part of our materials available via our community-focused outreach efforts. Community surveys have identified this as a needed resource. It is also a straightforward means for the court to offer assistance to SRLs without providing legal advice.

“How To” Clinics:

Beginning May 2003, this court will sponsor “Community Law Night” which includes a series of attorney-facilitated 60 minute sessions on various types of proceedings (divorce, custody, traffic, landlord-tenant disputes, personal injury effective preparation and conduct for court, etc.). Sessions include an overview of that particular type of case, a Q&A period and referral information. Sessions will be no-cost and held at the courthouse and/or public library and open to anyone. We will promote via a media campaign if grant funding is awarded. We hope to then offer such sessions on a regular basis as long as public interest remains. We will also explore expanding this concept to day-long extended education courses through the local community college.

Video Series:

We have obtained several informative videos providing overviews to the court system and domestic violence matters for petitioners and respondents. We will determine the best way to show these videos and launch a viewing schedule and promotional

campaign by the end of 2003. As interest dictates and funding allows, we will purchase more videos and expand this informational series.

Print Ad Awareness Campaign:

Many currently available services targeted towards SRLs are not well known and underutilized and proposed new activities need to be publicized. We want to increase the use of both court-sponsored and community-based programs and materials through an on-going print ad community awareness campaign. We will seek grant funding to provide for this campaign. We will track usage of all the SRLs services, expecting to see an increase in use resulting from the campaign.

Campaign will begin once funding is obtained.

SRL Roundtable:

Beginning Spring 2003, we will facilitate the convening of court and community based service providers to network and discuss collaboration and coordination possibilities to maximize the services to SRLs.

Self Help Center:

Throughout the next two years, the court will continue exploring funding, logistics, locations, and staffing possibilities to create a “bricks and mortar” center staffed by legal assistance attorney and paralegals. This is congruent with our 2000-2005 Strategic Plan implementation efforts.

Current space and funding restrictions within the court and with community-based service providers preclude the operation of such center in the near future. However, interest remains high and the court will continue to promote the creation of such center in within 4-7 years.

CURRENT AND POTENTIAL PARTNERS

San Luis Obispo County Bar Association
Lawyer Referral and Information Service
Creative Mediation Services
District Attorney
Legal assistance attorneys
San Luis Obispo Women’s Center
San Luis Obispo Legal Alternative Corporation
Cal Poly University and Cuesta Community College
Tribune and New Times newspapers
KSBY, local NBC affiliate

For more information about this court’s plans to serve SRLs, please contact:

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